



# Fire This Time!

## REPEAL ANTI-HUMAN BILL C-51!



### Why Now is More Important Than Ever to Defend our Democratic & Human Rights?

Things have not gone as planned for the Conservative government and their now infamous Bill C-51. Now known popularly as the "Secret Police Bill", it was supposed to speed through the approval process, propelled by a fear campaign meant to silence any public input or dissent. The opposite has happened, as more people have understood the Bill C-51 and its consequences, the more active they have become in opposing it. Months after it was supposed to have been a done deal, Bill C-51 is now set for the final vote of approval by the Senate of Canada. The fate of Bill C-51 now rests in the greasy hands of this unelected, scandal-ridden institution. So it should not shock us if they pass Bill C-51 despite the obvious fact that the majority of people in Canada are opposed to it.

*continued on page 10*



### Plundering of Afghanistan with War and Occupation:

### How Imperialists and Their Corporations Are Benefiting from the Misery of other Nations

It has been fourteen years since the US invaded Afghanistan. Along with ensuring that Afghanistan would no longer be a 'safe haven for terrorists', the foreign military presence was supposed to help Afghans improve their infrastructure, democratic system, and economy.

However, a walk through the streets of Kabul today reveals the stark contrast between rhetoric and reality in Afghanistan.

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### U.S-Cuba New Relations: A CUBAN Point of View...

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# Plundering of Afghanistan with War & Occupation:

## How Imperialists & Their Corporations Are Benefiting From the Misery of Other Nations

By Nita Palmer

*continued from cover*

Grand new buildings such as the Kabul Hotel Serena accommodate foreign investors and aid workers, while steps away war widows and their children sit in the street, begging for alms.

This is the reality of Afghanistan today: billions have been spent on new infrastructure, but the constant stream of aid and investment money flowing in to the country has done very little to help the average Afghan. At \$350 USD, a single night's stay in the cheapest room at the Hotel Serena costs more than most Afghans' annual income.

Much of the country today remains in a state of poverty and violence. Millions of people have been displaced by the fighting between the Taliban and NATO forces; they huddle in refugee camps on the outskirts of major cities. About a third of the population lives on less than a dollar a day. The US alone has spent over \$100 billion in aid to Afghanistan; yet 90% of the country remains without access to basic sanitation facilities.

While Afghans have seen little benefit from the hundreds of billions spent on the war and subsequent reconstruction efforts in their country, foreign corporations have been

*Destruction in Kabul, Afghanistan, 2014*



raking in the profits from defense, security, and reconstruction projects.

### Mercenaries and Hired Guns

The US and other NATO countries may be officially withdrawing their troops from Afghanistan, but that doesn't mean the war is over. Over 100,000 private security contractors remain in Afghanistan. A

document obtained by Salon from SAIC (now Leidos), one of the largest US military and intelligence contractors, explains the company's role in Afghanistan: "One of the PowerPoint slides defines the four "mission areas" of the company's five-year, \$400 million contract with the U.S. Army Research Laboratory, which provides contracted services to other combat commands, special forces and other parts of the U.S. military. They are "Expeditionary Warfare; Irregular Warfare; Special Operations; Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations." Clearly, these contractors are not just hired to provide support for military operations, but to act as hired guns in place of soldiers.

This so-called 'private security' is big business in Afghanistan. A 2013 report by the Congressional Research Service found that 'over the last six fiscal years, DOD [Department of Defense] obligations for contracts performed in the Iraq and Afghanistan areas of operation were approximately \$160 billion and exceeded total contract obligations of any other U.S. federal agency."

It is not only the US which is providing mercenaries in place of soldiers, however. Under the Canadian Forces Contractor Augmentation Program, SNC Lavalin-PAE Government Services - a joint venture between Quebec-based SNC Lavalin and

American PAE - was awarded a \$200 million contract with a \$200 million option to renew. Montreal-based company GardaWorld also has 2,000 employees in Afghanistan, providing 'security' to defense and construction industries.

### US and Canada's Reconstruction Farce

The reconstruction industry is big business in Afghanistan as well. The US has spent over \$100 billion on Afghanistan reconstruction, while the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has contributed nearly \$2 billion.

However, the reconstruction of Afghanistan is marred with more stories of failure than success. The construction of schools was key to winning support for the US/NATO presence in Afghanistan, both among Afghans and civilians in NATO countries. Many of the schools remain unfinished or empty, with no teachers to staff them. A \$3.4 million teacher-training facility in northern Afghanistan remains empty and incomplete four years after construction, although the US Army Corps of Engineers, which was overseeing the project, claim the building has been finished. An investigation by the office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) found that water, sewer and electrical systems remain unfinished and far from being completed.

In Kabul province, SIGAR has found two US-built schools to have 'potentially life-threatening risks' for teachers and students. According to SIGAR Inspector General John Sopke, "...the school's interior and exterior walls appear to be insufficiently constructed to hold the weight of the concrete ceiling."

The construction of health care facilities



*Destroyed school in the village of Budyali in Nangarhar Province, March 19, 2013*

in Afghanistan shares a similar story. In a country where nearly a quarter of children don't live to see their first birthday, health facilities are desperately needed. However, five years into one of the most ambitious health-care projects in Afghanistan - a \$60 million project by USAID to construct hospitals - not one of the hospitals has opened, according to a 2014 report by Reuters.

Programs aimed at giving Afghans jobs and increasing economic infrastructure have failed as well. The Washington Times reported in 2014 that USAID spent \$34 million on a project to teach Afghan farmers to grow soybeans, led by the American Soybean Association. The project was carried out

despite studies that showed the crops would not succeed in the region's arid soil. A major processing facility was built, but to date is not viable because the farmers were only able to produce 177 tons of soybeans. The facility needs a minimum of 5000 tons to operate.

One of the most infamous of Canada's projects in Afghanistan is the Dahla Dam. The Ottawa Citizen reports that, "When Canada's diplomats, development specialists and soldiers left Kandahar in 2011, our involvement with the dam ended and the government declared the \$50-million project a success. But even now, water doesn't reach 30 per cent of the 500 kilometres of canals that Canada paid to refurbish, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers."

The project went ahead as planned, despite Afghan farmers warning Canadian officials from the beginning that the dam would have to be raised in order to properly function. The US government is now responsible for raising the dam - a \$150-\$250 million project. But despite the dam's failures, contractor SNC-Lavalin walked away with the profits.

Given the history of failures by foreigners in rebuilding their country, it is no wonder that many Afghans have lost any faith they had in the promises of the US, Canada and NATO to improve their lives.

### Afghans Misery and Corporations Profit

Nipa Banerjee, the former head of CIDA's Afghanistan project has a bleak outlook on the aid Canada has provided. In an interview with the National Post, she said of CIDA's role in Kandahar: "All the projects have failed. None of them have been successful... I think we went into Kandahar to increase our

*Ministry of Defence Headquarters in Khabul built by US corporation, Gilbane.*







*Internally displaced refugee camp in Kabul.*

international profile... rather than thinking about the interests of the people of Kandahar”.

However, there is one group which has indeed benefited from the reconstruction of Afghanistan, failures and all. A number of major corporations have gained lucrative contracts out of the mess. One of the biggest benefactors of Afghanistan's 'reconstruction' is DynCorp, a major US contractor hired primarily to train and equip the Afghan army and police force. DynCorp received \$2.7B in contracts, or 69% of the State Department's reconstruction budget for Afghanistan from 2002-2013. Despite scandals involving shoddy construction of an Afghan army base, trafficking of labourers, and even some emails revealed by WikiLeaks that pointed to the company hiring child prostitutes, the company continues to be one of the State Department's preferred contractors.

Another major USAID contractor was suspended in January 2015. The non-profit International Relief and Development Inc., was found to be funneling millions into salaries and bonuses for the executives of their family-run organization. Between 2007 and 2013, IRD reported revenue of just over \$3 billion - 76% of it coming from USAID funds. According to a 2012 report by the Wall Street Journal, one of IRD's major road construction projects saw less than half of the \$269 million allocated spent on actual construction of roads, with the rest spent on administration, security, and other costs. The gravel roads which IRD was contracted to build were estimated to cost \$290,000 per mile - but instead cost over \$2.8 million per mile.

Report after report has found almost zero accountability for contractors hired by the governments of the US and other NATO countries. Some companies operate on no-bid contracts, meaning that they have no

competition - and no incentive to carry out projects in a cost-effective manner. While the majority of Afghans remain without even such basics as sanitation facilities, clean drinking water, and electricity, these corporations are being given free rein to line their pockets at the expense of Afghan citizens and taxpayers in aid-contributing countries.

### **Plundering Afghanistan's Riches by the US and Canada**

Shortly after the occupation began, Afghanistan was declared open for business by the new US-backed Afghan government. The Afghan Tax Code gives significant tax breaks to corporations, which pay a low 20% tax to begin with. The Tax Code also allows foreign corporations to take 100% of after-tax profits out of the country, with no requirement for them to reinvest those profits in Afghanistan.

*Pol-E-Charki Prison Facility in Southern Afghanistan built by US Corporation, Gilbane.*



The country's low taxes, lack of corporate regulation, and huge mineral reserves have encouraged a number of major mining companies to set up shop in Afghanistan, despite security problems. Afghanistan has major deposits of iron ore, copper, gold, lithium, and rare earth elements that are valued at over \$1 trillion. Afghanistan is estimated to hold 1.4 million metric tons of rare earth elements alone - a precious commodity in a world which needs these metals in everything from our cars to our phones.

Canadian companies have been at the forefront of breaking ground over Afghanistan's mineral reserves. The Globe and Mail reported in 2012 that, "Canadian companies are taking on leading roles advising Afghanistan's Ministry of Mines on the process: Vancouver-based Canaccord Financial Inc. on financing, SRK Consulting of Vancouver for geological matters and Toronto's Heenan Blaikie LLP for legal issues. Afghanistan is also emulating Canadian standards for reporting mineral reserves."

In 2011, Canadian company Kilo Goldmines was awarded a 25% stake, along with a consortium of other companies, to develop the Hajigak iron deposit in Bamiyan province. The deposit is estimated to be the largest in Asia and possibly the world.

These vast mineral reserves could turn Afghanistan into a thriving, prosperous country - if it weren't for laws which allow mining companies to take the profits out of Afghanistan for pennies on the dollar. The vast majority of Afghan families will not see a single benefit from this plundering of their resources. Given the global track record of

Canadian mining companies, they will likely see themselves thrown into more poverty and turmoil. A study by the Canadian Centre for the Study of Resource Conflict found that "Canadian companies are more likely to be engaged in community conflict, environmental and unethical behaviour, and are less likely to be involved in incidents related to occupational concerns" as compared with American, British and Australian companies. The study also found that "Of the 171 companies identified in incidents involving mining and exploration companies over the past 10 years, 34 per cent are Canadian."

### Corporations Declare Victory

The only real winners of the war in Afghanistan been the corporations which have circled the country like vultures, plundering the spoils of war. Afghans have suffered through fourteen years of bombings, home raids, and fighting, but the promised rebuilding of their country and gains in human rights have not materialized. Instead, they are left with empty schools and half-finished hospitals. These buildings make an excellent backdrop for photo-ops with politicians, but do nothing to contribute to Afghan health care or education. The careless way in which these projects are undertaken - without proper practices, materials, or local consultation - reflect the work of corporations and governments who care more about their bottom line than about improving Afghan lives.

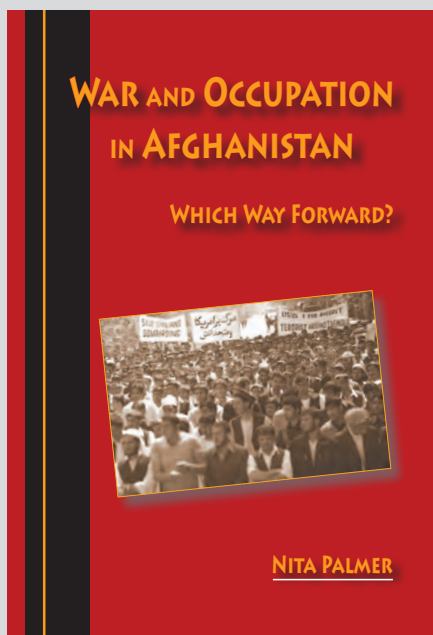
As the US and NATO pull their troops out of Afghanistan, any honest person can see that they have failed in all of their stated objectives. Poverty grips the majority of the nation. Afghans remain without basic necessities of life. Opium production has reached record levels - as has drug addiction. The country still ranks among the lowest on the United Nations' Human Development Index. The Taliban are gaining strength throughout the country. One could declare the war a complete failure. But it has succeeded in one way - perhaps one of the most important ways of all to the capitalist-imperialist governments which supported the mission: it has lined the pockets of corporations and opened the country up to exploitation for decades to come.

Corporations may be the winners in Afghanistan for now, but Afghans are not going down without a fight. Resistance to the occupation is growing, and no foreign force has ever succeeded in occupying Afghanistan for any length of time. We as peace loving people in Canada, the US and around the world must join them in their struggle against occupation, both by official militaries and foreign forces. Together we can end this cruel occupation - after all, Afghanistan is the 'graveyard of empires'.



## Battle of Ideas Press

### WAR AND OCCUPATION IN AFGHANISTAN WHICH WAY FORWARD?



*"The problem of Afghanistan boils down to just two words: foreign occupation. The Canada/US/NATO occupation forces claim that corruption, poverty, drug production, the presence of the Taliban and other social or political crises are the fundamental problems of Afghanistan which they must fix. The irony of this claim is that the same occupation forces have proven themselves completely incapable of fixing these problems or of bettering the lives of Afghan people one bit after eight years of occupation. Under the watchful eye of the occupation forces, corruption has become rampant in Afghanistan, from the local level all the way up to the highest levels of government. Afghanistan has gone from producing less than 10% of the world's opium in 2001 to producing a staggering 93% of the world's opium in 2008, according to the UN World Health Organization."*


BY NITA PALMER

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# UNITED STATES OF AMERICA THE WORST VIOLATOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS

'LAND OF THE FREE'

*By Manuel Yepe\**

The United States, whose government boasts it is the leader, role model and arbiter of “democracy” in the world, is one of the most backward nations on human rights.

Venezuelan writer, professor, prominent jurist, and social fighter for human rights Laila Tajeldine makes the case in an article posted on the Rebellion website.

Due to its own legislative restrictions, the US is not part of International conventions such as: the provisions relating to children's rights; the rights of persons with disabilities; economic, social and cultural rights; removal of all forms of discrimination against women; rights of migrant workers and their families; protection against forced disappearances; against the recruitment, use, financing and training of mercenaries; repression and punishment of the crime of apartheid; against apartheid in sports; and the Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on the civil and political rights aimed at abolishing the death penalty.

To prevent the prosecution of its soldiers who resort to the application of torture, massacres, extrajudicial killings and other war crimes and crimes against humanity, Washington does not recognize the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court on US citizens.

According to trustworthy sources, 66 million people live below the poverty line in the United States and 51% of public school students are in poverty.

In the United States, more than 50 million

people have no medical insurance, and many more have inefficient health coverage. The problem is particularly acute for the poor, African-Americans and other groups with limited access to health care.

The salary of women averages 22% lower than that of men for the same job.

The US corporate media ignore the political persecution practiced against those who oppose the bipartisan and capitalist policies in the United States. They hide the fact that there are about a hundred political prisoners in that country. They were fighting for the civil and political rights of the African-American population, the independence of Puerto Rico, against fascism and racism, for women's rights, etc.

The private prisons operating in the United States have admitted that the high rates of incarceration benefit their businesses. Prisons provide a cheaper labor force and do not recognize overtime.

According to the London International Centre for Prison Studies, the United States has 2.3 million people deprived of freedom. This is the highest number of prisoners in the world. The country has 5% of the world's population yet its prison population accounts for 23% of the imprisoned globally.

African-Americans represent 36% of prisoners in the United States, despite the fact that the overall Black population in the country is 12.6%. African-Americans represent 59% of those convicted and 74% of those who given life sentences.

Approximately 3% of all prisoners in US jails

reported having experienced one or more incidents of sexual abuse in the period 2011-2012. Since 2013, these types of studies were canceled in the country due to the impact their conclusions have on society.

According to a study published by the Left Business Observer, 20% of the country's GDP is produced in prisons. Many companies like IBM, Boeing, Motorola, Microsoft, ATT Wireless, Revlon, Macy's, are producing from prisons and benefit from their cheap labor.

The recent acts of police brutality against the African-American population show that racial discrimination remains state policy in the country.

In the United States, about 100 thousand immigrant and Black children are forced to do hard labor without any State protection. In agricultural fields children often work ten or more hours a day and risk pesticide intoxication, poisoning, illnesses produced by heat, injuries, permanent disability or death.

Laila Tajeldine concludes that “it is necessary to form an international movement—not committed to the large economic corporations—to join the struggle of the people of the United States which is silenced by the media. The movement must denounce the systematic and permanent violation of human rights in that nation.”

*\*Manuel E. Yepe, is a lawyer, economist and journalist. He is a professor at the Higher Institute of International Relations in Havana. He was Cuba's ambassador to Romania, general director of the Prensa Latina agency; vice president of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television; founder and national director of the Technological Information System (TIPS) of the United Nations Program for Development in Cuba, and secretary of the Cuban Movement for Peace and Sovereignty of the Peoples.*

# LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS...

## EL PEOR VIOLADOR DE LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS

**\* EN ESPAÑOL \***

*Por Manuel Yepe\**

Estados Unidos, país cuyo gobierno se precia de ser cabeza, modelo y juez de la “democracia” en el mundo, es una de las naciones con mayor retraso en materia de derechos humanos.

Así lo afirma y fundamenta la escritora y destacada jurista, profesora y luchadora social venezolana por los derechos humanos Laila Tajeldine en artículo reproducido por la red “Rebelión”.

Por impedimentos legislativos propios, Estados Unidos no es parte de Convenciones internacionales tales como las que versan sobre los derechos de los niños; los derechos de personas con discapacidad; los derechos económicos, sociales y culturales; la eliminación de todas las formas de discriminación contra la mujer; los derechos los trabajadores migratorios y de sus familiares; la protección contra desapariciones forzadas; contra el reclutamiento, la utilización, la financiación y el entrenamiento de mercenarios; la represión y castigo del crimen de apartheid; contra el apartheid en los deportes; y el protocolo facultativo del pacto internacional sobre los derechos civiles y políticos destinados a abolir la pena de muerte.

Para evitar que se juzgue a sus soldados por la aplicación de torturas, masacres, asesinatos extrajudiciales y otros crímenes de guerra y lesa humanidad que cometan, Washington no reconoce para sí la competencia de la Corte Penal Internacional.

Según reputadas fuentes, 66 millones de personas viven por debajo del umbral de la pobreza en Estados Unidos y el 51% de los estudiantes de escuelas públicas de Estados Unidos

están en la pobreza.

En Estados Unidos, más de 50 millones de personas no tienen seguro médico y otra cantidad mayor cuenta una cobertura de salud

ineficiente. El asunto es particularmente grave para los pobres, los afroamericanos y otros grupos con acceso limitado a la atención médica.

El salario de las mujeres es, como promedio, un 22% inferior al de los hombres con igual contenido laboral.

Las corporaciones mediáticas estadounidenses ignoran la persecución política que se practica contra quienes contrarían las políticas bipartidistas y capitalistas en Estados Unidos. Se oculta que hay alrededor de un centenar de presos políticos en ese país por luchar por los derechos civiles y políticos de la población afroamericana, la independencia de Puerto Rico, contra el fascismo y el racismo, por los derechos de las mujeres, etc.

Las prisiones privadas que funcionan en Estados Unidos han admitido que las altas tasas de encarcelamiento benefician sus negocios. Las cárceles aportan mano de obra más barata y no reconocen horas extras. Según el Centro Internacional de Estudios Carcelarios de Londres, Estados Unidos tiene 2,3 millones de personas privadas de libertad, la cifra más alta de presos en el mundo. El país tiene 5% de la población mundial y su población carcelaria representa el 23% de los privados de libertad a nivel global.

La población afroamericana representa el 36% de los presos en Estados Unidos, pese a que la población total afroamericana en ese país es de 12,6%. Los afroamericanos representan el 59% de los condenados y el 74% de los que reciben cadena perpetua.

Aproximadamente el 3% de presos en todas las cárceles de Estados Unidos reportan haber experimentado uno o varios incidentes de abuso sexual en el período de 2011-2012. Desde el 2013 estos tipos de estudios fueron cancelados en ese país por el impacto en la sociedad de las conclusiones.

Según un estudio publicado por el Left Business Observer de Estados Unidos, el 20% del PIB de Estados Unidos proviene de lo que se produce en las cárceles. Muchas compañías como IBM, Boeing, Motorola, Microsoft, AT&T, Wireless, Revlon, Macy's, están produciendo desde las cárceles, beneficiándose de su mano de obra barata.

Los recientes actos de brutalidad policial contra la población afroamericana demuestran que la discriminación racial sigue siendo política de Estado en ese país.

En Estados Unidos cerca de 100 mil niños inmigrantes y negros son obligados a realizar trabajos forzados y sin ninguna protección del Estado. En los campos agrícolas los niños suelen trabajar diez o más horas diarias y corren el riesgo de intoxicación por pesticidas, envenenamiento, enfermedades producidas por el calor, lesiones, discapacidades permanentes o muerte.

Laila Tajeldine concluye señalando que “se hace necesario la conformación de un movimiento internacional no comprometido con las grandes corporaciones económicas, que se unan a la lucha del pueblo de Estados Unidos, silenciado por los medios de comunicación, para denunciar la sistemática y sostenida violación de los derechos humanos en esa nación”.

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# COLONIALISM AT HOME



## HUNDREDS OF YEARS OF DEPLORABLE CONDITIONS FOR INDIGENOUS NATIONS IN CANADA

*By Aaron Mercredi*

The BC Liberal government continues to show contempt and disrespect towards Indigenous people in this province. The latest example of this comes from the Nicola Valley, in the interior of the province, where local First Nations have been fighting to stop the dumping of toxic sewage, known as bio-solids, on their lands. While the environmental and health aspects of this issue have been often highlighted, this is also a larger issue of the rights of Indigenous people to their land and resources, and to determine what happens in their territory without having government and businesses impose their agenda on them.

### Dumping Waste on Native Land

In October 2014, the Regional District of the Central Okanagan (RDCO) entered in to a five-year contract with an Fraser Valley-based company, BioCentral, to receive compost and biosolids at a location near Merritt. Bio-solids are the sludge that are a by-

product produced during the treatment of raw sewage. The RDCO has a contract to haul biosolids from a plant in West Kelowna to BioCentral's composting facility. The area where the biosolids are to be spread is known as Dry Lake, a 320-acre parcel of land that is near drinking water wells, housing developments and streams that flow in to the Nicola River, the valley's main water source and an important salmon

spawning ground. The local First Nations, as well as local residents, were never informed about this dumping and found out through second-hand information. When this was discovered, the local First Nations, whose members harvest food from the local lands and waterways, declared a moratorium on the dumping of biosolids.

In early March 2015, the Friends of the Nicola Valley, a community group organized to oppose the dumping of bio-solids, blocked Highway 8, the main highway leading in to the valley, to stop the company from delivering more biosolids to the composting site and dumping near their homes. In response, BioCentral announced it would impose its own moratorium on importing biosolids into the area until an agreement between the provincial Ministry of Environment (MOE) and the affected First Nations could be reached.

The provincial government intervened; however it would not honour or enforce





the moratorium announced by the First Nations. On April 15th, frustrated by the lack of response from the government, five Nicola Valley Chiefs and their representatives (Chief Harvey McLeod of Upper Nicola, Chief Marcel Shackelly of Nooaitch, Chief Aaron Sam of Lower Nicola, Chief Percy Joe of Shackan and Chief Lee Spahan of Coldwater), as well as supporters from Friends of the Nicola Valley, occupied Premier Christy Clarke's office in West Kelowna to draw attention to their grievances and force the government to act. Chief Aaron Sam stated, "The Nicola Valley First Nations hold and exercise Aboriginal Title and Rights over areas where biowaste operations are currently being carried out, and where future biowaste operations have been proposed. The biowaste operations affect our Aboriginal Title and Rights. The Province of British Columbia is obligated to consult and accommodate us in relation to the impacts of biowaste operations on our Rights and Title". Their demands were simple and straight-forward: that the provincial government collaborate on a process to gather and share information about bio-waste, manage and address impacts, and protect lands and wildlife in the valley. "Trucking thousands of tons of sewage treatment waste to be spread onto our farms, ranches and forests is not healthy for our lands. The traditional practices of harvesting from our lands and waterways has been jeopardized by this risky practice," the group said in a press release issued on the first day of the sit-in." On the sixth day, they left the office peacefully in an act of good faith after the provincial government promised to have a high-level meeting to discuss the issue.

On May 19th, a caravan left the Coldwater



reserve near Merritt. Led by local band chiefs, they walked, went by horseback and drove to the provincial legislature in Victoria to deliver the self-imposed moratorium on spreading biosolids in the Nicola Valley. With a bag of soil and water that they brought with them from home, they hoped to build awareness surrounding the biosolids issue and let the provincial government know that the issue is not going away.

### BC Liberals Ignore First Nations

On June 5th, the Interior Health Authority produced a letter declaring that the procedure of dumping biosolids in the Nicola Valley is unlikely to harm human health. The provincial government has essentially given the go-ahead to the practice and not honoured the moratorium declared by the Nicola Valley First Nations.

The fact that the BC government has treated the Nicola Valley First Nations with such contempt only falls in line with the colonial policies that Indigenous people in BC, as well as all over Canada, have suffered from since the beginning of colonization. It really makes one wonder, though, that after all Native people have been through with the loss of land, the genocidal residential schools and Canada's other crimes, that today the government is denying them the right to protect the integrity of what they have left.

Despite the refusal of the provincial government to honour the wishes of the Nicola Valley First Nations, leaders and activists from those communities, as well as the Friends of the Nicola Valley, continue to plan their next steps to oppose the poisoning of their land.

**This is what environmental racism looks like.**



Suncor Refinery

Aamjiwnaang First Nation

# REPEAL ANTI HUMAN BILL C-51



*By Thomas Davies*

*continued from cover*

The possibility to defeat Bill C-51 still exists. The size and impact of the movement to defeat it has generated many surprises, and to force its defeat would be a well deserved come from behind victory for poor and working people across Canada. However, most importantly, we need to understand the fight against Bill C-51 as part of a larger historical fight to defend human and democratic rights in Canada. This fight did not start with Bill C-51, and regardless of the outcome of one Senate vote, cannot end with it either. We need to apply the lessons of past and present movements, and continue the important work of educating, organizing and mobilizing to defend our rights. The movement against Bill C-51 has given us an important glimpse into what is possible if poor and working people work together to defend our common interests!

## **The Fast Track to Violating Human Rights – A Step by Step Program by Bill C-51**

*“The scale of information sharing being proposed is unprecedented, the scope of the new powers conferred by the act is excessive, particularly as these powers affect ordinary Canadians, and the safeguards protecting against unreasonable loss of privacy are seriously deficient.”*

- Daniel Therrien, Privacy Commissioner of



## **Why Now is More Important than Ever to Defend Our Democratic and Human Rights!**

Canada

Since Bill C-51 was introduced in January 2015, every monthly issue of the Fire This Time newspaper has carried an article explaining and denouncing it. At 62 pages long, and titled, “An Act to enact the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act and the Secure Air Travel Act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts,” the biggest challenge has been to summarize all of the reasons Bill C-51 is the biggest threat to democratic and human rights in Canada in the last 100 years.

We have not been alone. As the Guardian Newspaper in England recently reported, “No legislation in memory has united such a diverse array of prominent opponents as the proposed legislation...The campaign to stop Bill C-51 grew to include virtually every civil-rights group, law professor, retired judge, author, editorialist and public intellectual in Canada.” More importantly, thousands upon thousands of people have become active in the movement against Bill C-51 across Canada.

Bill C-51 could be studied as a step by step guide on how to break, steal, stretch and obscure legislation and definitions until existing human rights safeguards become basically meaningless in the name of “Fighting Terrorism.” Just watch:

Step 1: Allow the government to target those accused of speech promoting and advocating “terrorism in general”, without ever defining what “advocating” or “in general” means;

Step 2: Expand the meaning of “terrorism”

to include massively broad formulations like, “interference with various aspects of public life” or “the economic or financial stability of Canada”;

Step 3: Allow government agencies to arrest someone if they think a terrorist act “may” be committed instead of the current standard of “will”, thereby substituting speculation for real evidence when arresting someone;

Step 4: Allow the national spy agency, in this case the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), the explicit ability to break laws and violate individual rights if they can find one judge to agree with them;

Step 5: Give the national spy agency, which is currently limited only to investigative powers, the ability to “disrupt suspected terror activity,” without defining what disruption means;

Step 6: Finally, massively violate privacy by allowing multiple (in this case, 17) federal departments and agencies the potential ability to share all personal information they may hold on any individual.

Really, what isn’t made possible by these broadly worded and unexplained changes? Also, these are not the only violations Bill C-51 would enact! These steps are reinforced by other changes which include expansion of no fly lists, secret tribunals and the specific targeting of non-citizens living in Canada. It is perfectly clear why so many are so outraged by Bill C-51.

## **The Past, Present and Future of the Fight to Defend Human and Democratic Rights in Canada**

It is important for poor and working people in Canada to understand that many of the



rights they rightly consider to be fundamental and inalienable – the right to freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, right to vote, equality in public places – have not always been recognized by the government of Canada. They were won through many many years of struggle, and have had to be defended continually as well. The back and forth between the government of Canada and the people of Canada has been going on since the country was proclaimed in 1867, and the fight against Bill C-51 is part of this.

Many times during history the government of Canada has used racism and xenophobia to cut back on rights, often using the strategy of targeting a particular oppressed group but infringing on the rights of all.

The right to vote in Canada was not something immediately recognized for all. It took over 51 years after the Confederation of Canada before all white women in Canada won the right to vote in 1918. People of Chinese, Japanese, and Indian descent were outright denied or limited in their ability to vote in federal elections until the Federal Elections Act was changed to outlaw race as a grounds for exclusion from voting in 1948. Even after that, Indigenous people did not win the right to unrestricted voting in federal elections until 1960 – almost 100 years after the founding of Canada!

The Canadian government has also shown no concern for using its participation in wars abroad to justify crackdowns on rights at home. Thousands of innocent Ukrainians, Austrians and Germans were imprisoned in interment camps during World War I as “enemy aliens”. The Canadian government also wasted no time in using the opportunity to deport many “labour radicals” who were important organizers for worker’s rights such as the right to organize unions and for an 8 hour work day.

Again, during World War II, the government proclaimed that the Minister of Justice could detain anyone acting “in any manner prejudicial to the public safety or the safety of the state.” Between 30,000 to 35,000 “enemy nationals” and Canadian citizens were interned, including people of German and Japanese background. 20,000 Japanese Canadians were removed from the West Coast of Canada in 1942 alone. Labour organizers were again also targeted and imprisoned en mas.

At the end of World War II, the defection of Igor Gouzenko from the Soviet Union to Canada brought allegations of a Soviet spy ring operating in Canada. This gave the government another opportunity to clamp down on the rights of labour and social justice organizers. They invoked the War Measure Act, which gives the government unlimited power to use, “censorship and the control and suppression of publications, writings,

*Womens Rights Movement in Canada*



*Japanese Internment Camp in Canada*



*Cross-Canada Movement to Stop Bill C-51*



maps, plans, photographs, communications and means of communication”, “arrest, detention, exclusion and deportation;” and “appropriation, control, forfeiture and disposition of property and of the use thereof.”

*“The federal government invoked wartime powers to detain, interrogate, and prosecute several suspected communist spies. Habeas corpus was suspended, and people were arrested and questioned by the police for weeks. Denied access to legal counsel, they were held in tiny cells, kept under suicide watch, and guarded at all times. Even those who were acquitted at trial lost their reputations due to the stigma of being associated with treason. The proceedings of the espionage commission that was established to investigate the suspects rank alongside the October Crisis of 1970 as the most extensive abuse of individual rights in Canadian history during peacetime. The controversy surrounding the Gouzenko Affair ultimately led to the formation of several civil liberties organizations.”* - Canada’s Human Rights History, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta

In 1970, the government of Canada again suspended civil liberties during peacetime to respond to the growing movement for independence in Quebec. The flashpoint occurred when members of the Front de Liberation de Quebec (FLQ) kidnapped a British diplomat named James Cross and Quebec minister of labour minister Pierre Laporte. The government responded by imposing the War Measures Act and lining the streets with over 6000 soldiers. The next day, Pierre Laporte was found dead, killed by the FLQ.

*“Under the powers of the War Measures Act, the police conducted over three thousand searches and detained 497 people. Their actions were guided by a clear bias against nationalists and the political left in general, including many activists...The average detainee spent a week in jail, and the vast majority (87 percent) were never charged with a crime. By January 1971, only sixty-two had been charged. Within a month, half of them were released and the charges were dropped. In the end, only eighteen people were convicted of a crime arising from the crisis.*

*The use of the emergency powers resulted in extensive human rights abuses. Media censorship was rampant, especially for student newspapers. Several prominent media personalities were arrested and interrogated....”* -Canada’s Human Rights History, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta

During this time, Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau famously responded to a CBC interviewer expressing his concern regarding the heavy military presence:

*“Trudeau: Yes, well there are a lot of bleeding hearts around who just don’t like to see people with helmets and guns. All I can say is, go on and bleed, but it is more important to keep law*

*and order in this society than to be worried about weak-kneed people who don't like the looks of a soldier's helmet.*

*CBC : At any cost? How far would you go with that? How far would you extend that?*

*Trudeau: Well, just watch me."*

The most blatant human rights offence in Canada has been against indigenous nations. The government of Canada has continually attacked and denied their inherent right to self determination, and responded with extreme force whenever they attempt to affirm it. It would take an entire library to document the abuses, but the example of the Oka Standoff in 1990 is a good example. 2000 police, later replaced by 4500 soldiers with tanks, naval and air support were used against a blockade set up by a Mohawk community trying to

defend a sacred burial ground from a luxury golf course and condominium expansion. The extreme use of firepower was used to make only 50 arrests of Mohawks and their allies. All of which were eventually acquitted.

These are just a tiny few examples of the continual back and forth democratic and human rights tug of war that has been going on in Canada for decades. Another good indication is that it wasn't until 1982, 115 years after the founding of Canada, that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms became entrenched in the Constitution of Canada! More recently, in 2012 three United Nations expert committees gave Canada a failing grade on meeting human rights commitments.

### **Which Way Forward?**

In this history emerges Bill C-51, during a time when the Canadian government is once again basing itself around war, occupations and foreign interventions in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Mali and Ukraine. Given their history, it should come as no surprise that these wars abroad are accompanied by a crackdown on dissent and a limiting of rights at home. They may have changed the names of those we should fear, but the tactic of divide and rule remains the same. Islamophobia has become the thin edge of the wedge the government uses to pry open the door to increased attacks on everyone's rights and freedoms.

Fortunately, the fightback by people living in Canada has been strong and encouraging. Human rights, religious, media, community

organizations, and everyone in between, have joined in denouncing Bill C-51 and made it much more difficult to push through. Three National Days of Action have been organized by new networks and coalitions, which for many of those involved has been the first protests they have attended, let alone helped organize.

The dynamism is obvious to anyone who has participated in any of these actions. Five months later and there continues to be a growing and real dissatisfaction with Bill C-51. This dissatisfaction extends further into the way the Canadian government is making decisions which so obviously have nothing to do with the interests of the majority of poor and working people in Canada.

If we take a broader view of the struggle for human rights in Canada, the fight against Bill C-51 has already been an important step forward in the essential tasks of educating, organizing and mobilizing people to fortify and create organizations which can defend our rights. If Bill C-51 passes, it's a reconfirmation of what many of us have come to understand: When the government refuses to recognize our rights, we must unite to become a force to be reckoned with. The fight against Bill C-51 has put us all in a better position to continue the important fight to make sure the democratic and human rights of all people in Canada and around the world are defended and extended!

**No to Bill C-51!**

**No to Islamophobia!**



*Weekly picket & petition campaign to stop Bill C-51, organized by Vancouver's 'Working Group to Stop Bill C-51'*

## **We Must Fight Back, There Is No Other Option!**

### **Working Group to Oppose Bill C-51 Continues Important Campaign in Vancouver**

On June 8, 2015 the Working Group to Oppose Bill C-51 organized its 16th consecutive weekly protest against Bill C-51 at the 22nd Street Skytrain Station in New Westminster. Once again, many people were very appreciative and stopped on their way home from work to voice their opposition to Bill C-51. As public opposition has grown, the Conservative government has struggled to push Bill C-51 through the final stages of parliamentary approval. In this time, the weekly pickets have grown into an important campaign which has spread across Metro Vancouver. The pickets have an important public education component, as the Working Group sets up with banners, placards and an information table at different busy transit hubs. Often they become more like outdoor forums as people stop to listen to speakers, ask questions or voice their support for the campaign. An exciting step forward came on May 16th, when the Working Group were able to hold 5 simultaneous actions at busy skytrain stations in Surrey, New Westminster, Burnaby and Vancouver. Over 2100 educational brochures were distributed in the 5 locations. The Working Group also began collecting letters to send to the Senate demanding that they vote against Bill C-51. So far over 1000 letters have been signed, sealed and delivered as part of this initiative. The Working Group also participated on May 20, the third National Day of Action Against Bill C-51, joining with others from across Metro Vancouver, as well as across Canada, to remind the government of Canada that our opposition to Bill C-51 continues. The campaign has so far been to stations in Vancouver, Burnaby, New Westminster, Coquitlam, Surrey and Richmond. The next actions will be on Monday June 15 with another picket at the Broadway and Commercial Skytrain Station in Vancouver, starting at 4pm. At 7pm that evening, the Working Group is also organizing a Public Forum to discuss the new developments with Bill C-51 and the movement to oppose it at Joe's Cafe, 1150 Commercial Drive (at Napier Street) in Vancouver. All are welcome to attend! For more information about the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51, e-mail: [stoppolicestatebillc51@gmail.com](mailto:stoppolicestatebillc51@gmail.com) or check out the very active Twitter account @StopBillC51 and [www.firehustime.net](http://www.firehustime.net)



# THE GOAL IS CONTROLLING YEMEN, MAKING YEMEN SUCCUMB, AND RETURNING YEMEN TO THE U.S.-SAUDI HEGEMONY!



**A Speech by  
Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah,  
Leader of the Resistance  
Movement in Lebanon**

*Since March 26, 2015, a Saudi-led coalition of Arab gulf states, backed by the U.S. has carried a brutal and inhuman bombing campaign against the people of Yemen. Under the phony pretext of restoring to power Yemen's fugitive former president, Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi., the Saudi Arabian bombing campaign has created a humanitarian crisis with severe shortages in basic necessities. According to the UN, about 2,000 people have been killed and more than 7,000 others wounded and over half a million displaced as well as basic infrastructure such as thousands of hospitals, schools, bridges, power plants, mosques and homes have been destroyed in the conflict in the past two months.*

*Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah, is the secretary general of Hezbollah, Lebanon, and the leader of the Lebanese resistance movement against Israel and ISIS/ISIL. He has been a vocal voice against the Saudi led bombing campaign on the people of Yemen. The following excerpt is from a televised speech delivered by Sayyed Nasrallah on May 5, 2015. We think it is useful and important for our readers to learn from the diverse ideas and opinions in the anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist movement.*

## By Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah

Peace be upon you and Allah's mercy and blessings.

First, I will start with Yemen. Forty days ago, the Saudi regime declared its war against Yemen under the name of "Firmness Storm" after officially specifying several goals for it. These goals were mouthed by the official spokesman, by a statement issued by the coalition, and by the Saudi media - the satellites of "Firmness Storm", as I dubbed it. Saudi officials tackled these objectives on various occasions. After twenty-six days of the aggression and on April 21, 2015, the aggressive coalition announced the termination of "Firmness Storm" claiming that it had achieved all its goals, and

consequently, it announced the launch of another oppression called "Renewal of Hope for the Yemeni People", and it stated for it definite targets which I will mention later on.

Since then, the so called "Renewal of Hope" is still ongoing - meaning the aggression is still ongoing. Again we are before a very big deception and misinformation practiced since days - since they announced the termination of "Firmness Storm" to our very day. Indeed this is a major and very

*May 10, 2015 - People flee Saudi airstrikes in Sanaa, Yemen*



dangerous deception which we must tackle for a while before giving an evaluation and wrapping the Yemeni topic with a stance I will call for.

Starting with the first topic - the Saudi claim of achieving all the targets - we find that this is the biggest attempt of deception practiced since "Firmness Storm" was terminated theoretically. The official spokesman, the Saudi media, Saudi officials, the Arab media, political forces, and hypocrite writers and journalists talked, blessed, and felicitated the great victory made by the Saudi Kingdom



in 26 days over Yemen under the name of "Firmness Storm" which had achieved all its objectives. This was also mentioned again today in the Gulf Cooperation Council. So there was an assertion on the idea that "Firmness Storm" achieved all of its objectives.

Unfortunately, this spread over the Arab world, the Islamic world, and the entire world because the media of the other camp is stronger, and we acknowledge that. We acknowledge that our camp's media - the bloc which is aggressed against in this war in general - does not have the strength, the capabilities, and the coverage of the media of "Firmness Storm". Does any person accept this deception and this misinformation?

As an Arab citizen - as the war is in the name of Arabs and Arabism - I have the right



*Airport in Sanaa, Yemen bombed by Saudi airstrikes*

to ask: Which aims were achieved? How it is that all the targets were achieved not only after 26 days from the day the aggression started but to our day - the fortieth day? Well, I won't ask for all the targets; I will ask for showing me only one target which was achieved since the beginning of "Firmness

Storm” to our day - i.e. after forty days from the commence of the aggression. Had Saudi Arabia or the Saudi Regime restored its allies to their alleged legitimacy in Yemen? Did it return Abed Rabbu Mansour to Yemen or Aden, or Sanaea? Was it able to prevent the spread of the Yemeni Army and the popular committees to where they want to expand? Has it confiscated the arms of Ansarullah as was mentioned among the goals of “Firmness Storm”?

Was it able to achieve any of the goals it mentioned? On Friday, we talked; others did talk too; and we mentioned and listed the targets they set. None of them was achieved! Were they able to achieve the true goal - spreading their hegemony over Yemen? They weren't. Did they expel or end the supposed, claimed, and alleged Iranian hegemony? Simply, let's put an end to the first deception and say: Show me one target which was achieved so far and not only before the so called “Renewal of Hope” and not all the targets of “Firmness Storm”? As far as this point is concerned, we are before a clear Saudi defeat and a clear Yemeni victory also. The first reason behind this Saudi failure is - Praise be to Allah Al Mighty - the steadfastness, firmness, determination, courage, and coherence of the Yemenis and their incubating of the Yemeni Army and the popular committees. This is the reason which prevented the achievement of any of the goals of “Firmness Storm”. There might be other reasons, but they are helping and auxiliary. So even in this point, we are before a clear defeat and a clear Yemeni victory. Here we are talking about a round and not about the entire war.

The second point is the second round under the name of Hope Storm. This is also another deception attempt to cover the failure that took place in the first round and to cover the

deficiency manifested in the first round. So this regime and their allies knew very well that they are completely unable to achieve these goals. Well, they put big goals... goals that need a long war and also a broad land operation. They do

*Sadah, Yemen - BEFORE*



*Sadah, Yemen - AFTER*



5- Confronting the military movements and operations of the Houthis Militia and their alliances - according to the original text - and preventing them from using arms looted from camps or smuggled from abroad.

6 - Finding an international coalition to prevent aerial and maritime arms delivery to so and so militias.

These are the goals of “Renewal of Hope”.

Indeed, they are not faithful in their announcement of these goals, and I will go back to them later on.

In fact, the true goal is the first goal: controlling Yemen, making Yemen succumb, and returning Yemen to the US-Saudi hegemony. Now it is made clear that if they failed to achieve hegemony and to make Yemen succumb, they will destroy Yemen on its people. This is what is taking place.

Anyway, looking on these announced targets for “Renewal of Hope”, they can claim that they are achievable. Well, let's carry a political dialogue. They claim that they are protecting civilians. They are shelling and bombarding. What is the aim of shelling? They say that they want to protect the civilians and fight terrorism and that the sea and aerial siege is to prevent arms delivery and to confront the movements and the like.

Practically, they descended from top of the tree or its middle to its bark claiming that these targets have been achieved at a time none of them was achieved. They set targets which they can say may be achieved or realized. This expression is also a deception attempt but it is also an expression of deficiency.

The third deception: As far as the practical track of the practical goals of “Renewal of Hope”, they claim that this operation serves these goals. Let's see if they are serving these goals.

Protecting civilians: Since the beginning of “Renewal of Hope” to our day, the raids and

not dare to embark in a broad land operation, and they are still searching for armies for rent, and we heard yesterday and today that some soldiers will come from Senegal to fight in Saudi Arabia.

Anyway, for the new operation “Renewal of Hope”, they set new goals which seem modest and achievable. So the deception here is in changing the name of the operation or the war from “Firmness Storm” to “Renewal of Hope”. They considered that all the goals of “Firmness Storm” were achieved, and they put humble targets for “Renewal of Hope” so that they won't be asked for their failure later on as these goals are modest, and they may claim that they achieved them.

Let's look at the goals they announced when declaring the commence of “Renewal of Hope” through which they will achieve them and the termination of “Firmness Storm”:

1 - A swift continuation of the political operation according to UN Resolution so and so and the Gulf Initiative and the recommendations of the National Dialogue.

2- Getting along in protecting civilians.

3 - Getting along in fighting terrorism.

4- Getting along in evacuating foreign subjects, intensifying medical and relief aids for the Yemeni people in the afflicted areas, and facilitating international efforts in this perspective.





shelling in all its forms are targeting houses, residential areas, and civil targets as was the case since the beginning of the war.

Is defending civilians achieved through the killing of more civilians?

Even more, they are using internationally prohibited weapons as was revealed by some international organizations to the effect of using cluster bombs which are the most dangerous weapons against civilians. In Lebanon, we have lived this experience, and we are still suffering from them following July 2006 Aggression.

**Fighting Terrorism:** This is one of the goals of "Renewal of Hope". What is the outcome? They are offering arms and artillery to al-Qaeda, making coalitions with al-Qaeda and Hadi Militia, broadening the range of al-Qaeda hegemony, controlling areas in which they did not exist before, and bombing the Yemeni Army and the popular committees to prevent them from reaching the regions where al-Qaeda is operating. So in the contrary, they are acting opposite to the claimed topics.

Let's see now their claim of intensifying humanitarian aids for example. What took place so far? They have prevented any humanitarian aid from any place in the world? Even worse, they are resorting to hitting the airports and especially Sanaa Airport and destroyed plane routes. The event

is well known. An Iranian civil airport violated the Yemeni skies in an attempt to land in Sanaa and deliver humanitarian aids. They hit the airport to prevent this plane from landing. Is this called facilitating and intensifying humanitarian aids?

**The political operation:** What they had made so far is complicating the political operation and making political dialogue seem remote because instead of waiting for the UN envoy to come and call all the sides for dialogue on a neutral land or a country which is not participating in the aggression on Yemen - this condition was announced and observed by the Yemeni Islamic and national forces which are against the aggression - Saudi Arabia ordered Abed Rabbu to call for a dialogue conference perhaps on May 17 in Riyadh! What does this mean? They don't want this dialogue to take place and this table to be formed and this political operation to be launched. This is called

complicating and crippling dialogue and not pushing it forward.

The fourth deception is deluding the entire world and the international community that Saudi Arabia terminated the war on Yemen. It announced that it terminated "Firmness Storm" and that it is staging an operation that has limited goals and the like.

This is not only deception; it is also falsification and lying. The war is still the same after "Renewal of Hope".

For 40 days nothing changed; the war is even fiercer and more violent, brutal, and criminal. Nothing changed except the name and the alleged announced goals.

More than any time in the past, today the goal of this aggression is made clear. It is also clear that the Yemeni people, the Yemeni Army, and the national forces in Yemen refuse to succumb and yield and go back to the time of hegemony, and they insist on their sovereignty, freedom, and



*June 6, 2015 - Children protesting in Sanaa, Yemen. Signs read "Don't kill children in Yemen", "Don't kill my Dad and Mom" and "Islam is a religion of peace"*

the independence of their country and on confronting the aggression.

This is clear after 40 days. As we said a couple of weeks ago, there is no sign of defeat. This is still valid today. Rather these Yemeni forces, the Yemeni Army, the popular committees, and the tribes have started regaining the initiative in the border regions, and in the battle field they are advancing as acknowledged by "Firmness Storm" satellites and media or else what is the reason for the Saudi air force to stage 120 or 150 raids on a definite area in Aden? All those who know in military know what that means.

Well, there is a decisive and firm Yemeni will not to yield, succumb, or retreat. This is the will and the decision of the Yemenis, but there remains another thing which is the responsibility of the world, the states, and the peoples including the peoples of

our region in face of this aggression on the humanitarian level, in face of this sea, land, and air siege, and in face of preventing the delivery of food stuff, medicine, and fuel. In fact, it is not only preventing the delivery but also preventing the transportation of food, medical stuff, and fuel from one place to another inside Yemen and shelling all the places where there might be or they suppose there are medicine, wheat, food stuff, or fuel. This is what is taking place now. International organizations are talking about a serious and catastrophic humanitarian situation.

Indeed, that will not shake the will of the Yemenis. I am saying so to say that the entire world must assume responsibility or else I tell all these aggressors that this policy or strategy - call it whatever you want - and practicing pressure on the fighters, the resistance men, or the owners of a free will by killing their families, women, and children and demolishing their house is a futile policy that did not lead anywhere in the past.

The evidence is what happened in Vietnam, Gaza and Lebanon. In all its war, "Israel" targeted civilians. Gaza was besieged, and it is still besieged. During the 33-day-war, Lebanon was besieged and everything was bombarded. Yet, was the will of the resistance shaken? Was the resistance weakened? Was it undermined? Did that make it retreat? No! Never! Rather that made it more steadfast, resilient, and determined to make victories.

I tell these aggressors: All what you are perpetrating on the humanitarian level will not change the struggle equation. It will only make your faces uglier and more dreadful, and it will make the Yemenis more convinced of your aggressiveness, oppression, and tyranny. It will make the Yemeni people unite behind these who are fighting to defend the sovereignty, independence, unity, and dignity of Yemen.

I do not want to view the issue from this perspective but rather from the point that the world must assume its responsibility on this level. World states - especially the Arab and Islamic states - must seek to lift the siege to facilitate the delivery of medical aids and food stuff to the Yemeni people through the Security Council and international institutions and through violating the siege for whatever price and in any form. This is also the responsibility of the peoples. I call on everyone to shoulder his responsibility on this perspective, and I will not reiterate. Despite this catastrophic humanitarian side, we are witnessing inside Yemen more and more heroism, zeal, and steadfastness even on the popular and civil level. This policy and strategy did not lead to the defeat of any people as long as they own the will, determination, leadership, resolution, and martyrs.



# CANADIAN & U.S. ACTIVISTS RECEIVE RECOGNITION FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE RETURN OF THE 5

Ottawa, 4 May.-Canadian highlighted Cuba solidarity activists Tamara Hansen and Elizabeth Hill received, together with a group of institutions and individuals from all over the world, a recognition for their contribution to the struggle for the return of the Five, on behalf of Gerardo Hernandez, Antonio Guerrero, Rene Gonzalez, Ramon Labañino and Fernando Gonzalez, during the International Meeting of Solidarity with Cuba, which was held last Saturday in Havana, led by Miguel Diaz-Canel, first vice president of the Councils of State and Ministers, Cubadebate website reported.

Elizabeth Hill is president of the Cuba Canada Friendship Association of Toronto (CCFA-Toronto



for its acronym in English) and co-chair of the Canadian Network of Solidarity with Cuba (CNC for its acronym in English). Tamara Hansen, meanwhile, is a young leader within several organizations in Vancouver, as the Committee for the Release of the Five in that city and Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba. All these groups have a long, beautiful and intense page of solidarity with Cuba and stood out in the past 16 years for their shares in favor of the release of the anti-terrorist heroes.

In the final words of the Meeting Gerardo Hernandez said he deeply appreciated the work of all those institutions and individuals who contributed to the return of the Five expressing “at the bottom of our hearts we know that if we are here we owe largely to the efforts of comrades from all over the world who did not rest until you see us here”.

*(Embassy of Cuba in Canada with files from Cubadebate)*

# GERARDO HERNÁNDEZ: WORDS OF GRATITUDE



*In his final comments at the International Solidarity with Cuba Conference, held in Havana May 2, Gerardo Hernández of the Cuban Five asserted that the freedom of the anti-terrorists would not have been won without the efforts of all present*

May 4, 2015

“Thank you brothers and sisters of the world, you should know that when we say thank you, it is not a formality. Deep within our hearts we know that if we are here, it is due, in large measure, to the efforts of friends like you around the entire world, who did not rest until they saw us here. This is how I begin my words of gratitude,” Gerardo said.

“You are representative of a broader group of brothers and sisters who could not all be here, but convey our gratitude to them, everyone was important to the unity of forces which allowed us to be here today, with our families and people.

“Yesterday (May 1) was an historic day, a longed-for dream come true, and even greater because of your presence. Today we met each other and we are a big family which must become increasingly united, become one, since many battles remain, such as that of Oscar López and so many others who have the right the enjoy the freedom we have,” he continued.

He explained that the Cuban Five are ready to support any just cause, wherever their efforts are needed. He said the delegates, “What do we do now? You tell us.”

“The blockade remains in force, and if some day it is eliminated, we will remain battle ready, so that no one imposes it again. We revolutionaries can not rest, because... no, we don't feel like being a U.S. colony, and yes, we do feel like being a Latin American nation, as I heard people chanting in the Plaza yesterday,” Gerardo continued, while leading the crowd in the chant.

“In the name of the Five, of our families, who many of you received with so much affection, we thank you eternally. You have asked me about Gema, we were not able to bring her, following the doctor's recommendations, and due to the weather, but she is here with us, because she, as well, came to be because of all this solidarity,” he said.

Gerardo made it clear that the Five were not released because of a negotiation, but as a result of the unified efforts of many, emphasizing that the long hours and days of resistance over 16 years required strength, and that the support and solidarity of so many people was one of the sources of much needed inspiration.

“Today,” he concluded, “you congratulate us, and you recognize that the resistance of the Five is no more than the resistance of the Cuban people, which, for more than 50 years, imperialism has been unable to break. They have not isolated us; they themselves are the ones who have been isolated, since a socialist Cuba perseveres here, a people which is more determined than ever to struggle for its system. That is why we continue to trust in your support, your spirit of struggle, and the solidarity of all of you brothers and sisters.”

Reprinted from Daily Granma

# CHE LIVES! The struggle continues!

*Born June 14, 1928 this month we celebrate what should have been Ernesto “Che” Guevara’s 87<sup>th</sup> birthday. Unfortunately this revolutionary hero had his life cut short during one of his internationalist missions in Bolivia in 1967. However Che Guevara continues to be a face recognized throughout the world as a symbol of resistance, rebellion and socialism. But while many know the face, few have had the chance to really study his ideas. In honour of Che Guevara’s Birthday, Fire This Time wanted to share a few poignant quotes from his famous letter ‘Socialism and Man in Cuba’.*

- “Capitalism is a race of wolves: he who arrives does so only at the expense of the failure of others.”
- “Socialism is young and makes mistakes. We revolutionaries often lack the knowledge and the intellectual audacity to face the tasks of the development of the new human being by methods different from the conventional ones, and the conventional methods suffer from the influence of the society that created them (once again the topic of the relation between form and content appears). Disorientation is great and the problems of material construction absorb us.”
- “It is not a question of how many kilograms of meat are eaten or how many times a year someone may go on holiday to the sea shore or how many pretty imported things can be bought with present wages. It is rather that the individual feels greater fulfillment, that he has greater inner wealth and many more responsibilities. In our country the individual knows that the glorious period in which it has fallen to him to live is one of sacrifice; he is familiar with sacrifice.”
- “Let me say, with the risk of appearing ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love. It is impossible to think of an authentic revolutionary without this quality. This is perhaps one of the great dramas of a leader; he must combine an impassioned spirit with a cold mind and make painful decision without flinching.”
- “Revolutionary leaders must have a large dose of humanity, a large dose of a sense of justice and truth to avoid falling into dogmatic extremes, into cold scholasticism, into isolation from the masses. They must struggle every day so that their love of living humanity is transformed into concrete deeds, into act that will serve as an example, as a mobilizing factor.[...] If his revolutionary eagerness becomes dulled when the most urgent tasks are carried on a local scale and if he forgets about proletarian internationalism, the revolution that he leads cease to be a driving force and it sinks into a comfortable drowsiness which is taken advantage of by imperialism, our irreconcilable enemy, to gain ground. Proletarian internationalism is a duty, but it is also a revolutionary need. This is how we educate our people.”

!CHE VIVE! ¡La Lucha Sigue!



# CUBA COMBATING EBOLA IN AFRICA



**VANCOUVER WELCOMES REVOLUTIONARY INTERNATIONALIST CUBAN DR. JOSÉ DE JESÚS PORTILLA!**

On Thursday May 21st, Cuban Dr. José de Jesús Portilla came to Vancouver for a short, but very successful visit, as part of a Canada-wide speaking tour organized by the Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC). This tour focused on the revolutionary internationalist response of Cuba's Medical Brigade in fighting the devastating outbreak of Ebola in West Africa. The Vancouver event was sponsored by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC), the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver and the Canadian Cuban Friendship Association – Vancouver.

At two events, both held on May 21st, Dr. Portilla inspired participants as he explained the reasons why Cuba, with its professional and experienced international medical missions, quickly rose to the greatest involvement and leadership in the fight against Ebola.

*Continued on page 30*



# Racism in the U.S.A:

## If Baltimore Was Not in the United States



By Manuel Yepe\*

# BLACK LIVES MATTER

# I CANT BREATHE

A few days ago, The Washington Post published a curious speculative analysis conducted by journalists about what major Western media would have reported about a situation such as the one created in the city of Baltimore, Maryland, on the wave of unrest created by the death, on April 19, of the young black US citizen Freddie Gray while he was in police custody.

From the perspective of the journalists who made the analysis, if what is happening in Baltimore were happening in any other country, this is how Western media would have covered it:

-Many international analysts would have predicted the seeds of a so-called "spring" such as that which emerged in some Middle East nations. They would have praised the protests by young people mobilized via social networks.

-International government leaders would have expressed their concern over the rising tide of racism and state violence in the country where these events were taking place. They would have condemned the treatment of ethnic minorities in the country and corruption in the state security forces around the country when handling cases of police brutality.

- London would have released a statement calling the country's regime to rein in the state security agents who have been brutalizing members of ethnic minority groups. It would demand equal application of the rule of law, as well as the respect for human rights of all citizens, black or white. It would blame the local government for jeopardizing a healthy democracy.

-The United Nations would have issued a declaration: "We condemn the militarization and police brutality that we have seen in recent months in that country, and we

strongly urge the state security forces to launch a full investigation into the death of the victim in police custody. There is no excuse for excessive police violence." The U.N. would also have called the government of the nation to make a concerted effort to make records of police violence public to improve transparency and cut down on corruption in the justice system.

-International human rights groups would have appealed to the global community to facilitate asylum for the ethnic black minorities of the country where the riots caused by the murder of the arrested citizen were taking place.

Of course none of this would apply to the government in the case study, if the events had taken place in the United States. But in fact, the events are taking place –have taken place many times in the past, and nobody doubts they will take continue taking place– in the United States.

A different kind of analysis was published by The New York Times awhile before. It emphasized that 1,500,000 African Americans have been missing from US everyday life in a recent period. More than one out of every six black men who today should be between 25 and 54 years old has disappeared from daily life by premature death or incarceration.

According to the last census conducted in the United States, homicide is the leading cause of death among young black men.

The United States has the highest number of prisoners in the world. With just 5% of the world's population, the US has 25% of the world's incarcerated population. Of the 2.3 million prisoners in the US, nearly 40% are African-Americans. African-Americans

represent only 12.6% of the US total population. It is six times more likely for a black man to be imprisoned than for a white man.

The United States is the developed nation with the biggest gap in economic inequality between rich and poor. Inequality of wealth is even greater than income inequality.

A mere 3% of the wealthiest families own more than the combined wealth of the 90% of the families with fewer resources put together. This gap has steadily widened since the last years of the 20th Century until today.

Black families in the US were the most affected by the banking crisis when the housing-predatory-loans bubble exploded in 2007.

By the end of the twentieth century, the average white family in the superpower had a wealth six times that of the black family. Today, the average white family has twelve times more than the average black family, and sharp economic inequality continues to increase.

These disparities are dramatically reproduced in the causes of unemployment which affects the citizens with white skin so much more.

*\*Manuel E. Yepe, is a lawyer, economist and journalist. He is a professor at the Higher Institute of International Relations in Havana. He was Cuba's ambassador to Romania, general director of the Prensa Latina agency; vice president of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television; founder and national director of the Technological Information System (TIPS) of the United Nations Program for Development in Cuba, and secretary of the Cuban Movement for the Peace and Sovereignty of the Peoples.*



# RACISMO EN LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS



## SI BALTIMORE NO FUERA ESTADOUNIDENSE

*\* EN ESPAÑOL \**

*Por Manuel Yepe\**

El diario estadounidense "The Washington Post" publicó en días pasados un curioso análisis especulativo llevado a cabo por sus periodistas acerca de lo que habrían divulgado los medios de prensa más importantes de Occidente sobre una situación tal como la que se creó en la ciudad de Baltimore, del estado de Maryland, con motivo de la ola de disturbios que generó la muerte el 19 de abril del joven negro estadounidense Freddie Gray cuando se hallaba bajo custodia policial. Desde el punto de vista de quienes participaron en el análisis, si estos hechos hubieran tenido lugar en cualquier parte fuera de Estados Unidos la reacción habría sido aproximadamente la siguiente:

– Numerosos analistas internacionales habrían presagiado el surgimiento de una "primavera" del tipo de las habidas en algunas naciones del Oriente Medio en el país tomado como base, elogiando la movilización de los jóvenes para la protesta a través de las redes sociales.

– Los gobiernos del mundo habrían expresado su preocupación por el auge del racismo y la violencia estatal en el país donde estuviera ocurrido el fenómeno. Habrían condenado el trato a las minorías étnicas y la corrupción de las fuerzas de seguridad al abordar casos de brutalidad policial en el país en cuestión.

– Londres habría emitido un comunicado llamando al régimen del país a frenar los excesos de los agentes de seguridad del Estado en la nación implicada por haber tratado brutalmente a miembros de minorías étnicas. Exigiría la aplicación de la ley en pie de igualdad para todos los ciudadanos, negros o blancos, así como el respeto a los derechos humanos esenciales, culpando al régimen local por atentar contra una democracia sana.

– La ONU, por su parte, también habría emitido una declaración condenando la militarización y la brutalidad policial "que hemos observado a lo largo de los últimos meses en el país de los hechos", instando firmemente a las fuerzas de seguridad a llevar a cabo una investigación rigurosa sobre la muerte del detenido. "No hay excusa para la violencia policial excesiva". Además, habría exhortado al gobierno de esa nación a hacer públicas las bases de datos sobre la violencia policial para mejorar la transparencia y reducir la corrupción en su sistema judicial.

– Los grupos internacionales que abogan en defensa de los derechos humanos se habrían dirigido a la comunidad internacional, pidiendo facilitar asilo a las minorías étnicas negras del país donde ocurrían los desórdenes causados por el asesinato del detenido.

Por supuesto que nada de lo anterior sería aplicable al gobierno del país culpable en el imaginario caso en estudio, dado que los hechos ocurrieron, han ocurrido muchas veces y nadie duda que sigan ocurriendo en Estados Unidos.

Un análisis de otro tipo había sido publicado por el diario estadounidense The New York Times poco antes, resaltando que 1.500.000 afroamericanos han sido eliminados de la vida cotidiana de Estados Unidos en el período reciente, entre tanto seis personas negras de 24 a 54 años han desaparecido de la sociedad estadounidense por muerte prematura o encarcelamiento.

Según el último censo realizado en Estados Unidos, el homicidio ocupa el primer lugar como causa de muerte de los hombres negros jóvenes. Estados Unidos es el país con mayor número de presos en el mundo (con el 5% de la población mundial posee el

25% de la población encarcelada). De los 2,3 millones de presos que tiene, casi el 40% son afroamericanos, quienes solo representan el 12.6% de la población total. Es seis veces más probable que sea encarcelado un hombre negro que uno blanco.

Estados Unidos es la nación desarrollada con una mayor brecha de desigualdad económica entre ricos y pobres, y la desigualdad de riqueza es aún mayor que la desigualdad de ingreso. El 3% de familias con mayor riqueza, posee más del doble que el 90% de las familias con menores recursos. Esta brecha se ha ensanchado continuamente desde fines del siglo XX hasta hoy.

Las familias negras estadounidenses fueron las más afectadas por el escándalo de los depredadores préstamos bancarios cuando explotó la burbuja inmobiliaria de 2007. Hacia fines del siglo XX, la familia blanca media en la superpotencia tenía una riqueza seis veces superior a la de la familia negra. Hoy, la familia blanca media posee doce veces más que la negra y la pronunciada desigualdad económica sigue agudizándose.

Estas disparidades se reproducen dramáticamente en las causas del desempleo subsiguiente, que afecta de manera muy superior a los ciudadanos que no son de piel blanca.

*\*Manuel E. Yepe Menendez es periodista y se desempeña como Profesor adjunto en el Instituto Superior de las Relaciones Internacionales de La Habana.*





# MAWO Organizes and Mobilizes Against Imperialist War & Occupation

## The New Era of War & Occupation Must be Stopped!

By Janine Solanki

The month of May was marked by protests, with activists joining together against increased imperialist attacks in the Middle East. In particular, U.S. attempts to divide Iraq and the U.S.-backed Saudi bombing of Yemen called for a strong response from antiwar activists. Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) joined with the Iraqi, Yemeni and Muslim communities in three protest actions in May, and together are continuing to organize and mobilize for an end to these criminal wars and occupations.

While the U.S.-led war and occupation of Iraq has devastated the country since 2003, a new war on Iraq has sprung up from within a war on Iraq which never actually ended. Since a year ago, in June of 2014, the U.S. started sending more troops to Iraq, and soon after started launching airstrikes on Iraq with the support of their imperialist allies, including Canada. These attacks have come with the claim of fighting ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). However the terrorist group ISIS did not appear out of nowhere. Over a decade of U.S. war and occupation in Iraq created and enforced sectarian policies, while in Syria over four years of U.S. fomented civil war saw U.S. funding and arming of mercenaries and so-called "moderate rebels" which directly or indirectly has included ISIS. Essentially, the current crisis is the result of the "divide and conquer" policies employed by the U.S. Now the U.S. government aims to divide Iraq even further, with the proposed U.S. Congress bill that would see Iraq as three separate countries, in order for the U.S. government to fund and arm different groups in Iraq separately!

In protest of the continuing U.S. occupation of Iraq and against this outrageous new plan to divide Iraq, MAWO joined together with the Iraqi and Muslim community in Vancouver for a picket action in front of the U.S. Consulate on May 10th. Protesters chanted energetically throughout the picket and held signs that said "Iraqis are United!" and "Stop USA's Plans to Divide Iraq!". Mamdoh Ashir, Iraqi-Canadian and Muslim community activist, MC'd and led the protest and invited up speakers from both the Iraqi and Muslim community as well as from MAWO.



The protest was observed by hundreds of pedestrians who were walking to and from the waterfront area and many of them either stopped, picked up fliers and brochures or joined the protest. Protesters had a great surprise when one of the hundreds of passersby was the world-renowned British comedian, actor and social justice activist Russell Brand!

Without hesitation Russell Brand greeted the protesters and joined in holding a picket sign, spent some time with protesters and also shared some supportive words over the microphone in solidarity with the Iraqi people and against U.S. intervention in Iraq.

On May 23rd activists joined together again in protest, this time at MAWO's monthly antiwar rally and petition campaign in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery in downtown Vancouver. MAWO joined with the Yemeni, Iraqi and Muslim community to protest over two months of a brutal and devastating Saudi-led bombing campaign against Yemen. With banners, picket signs and an information table, the protest called attention to the devastation that the U.S.-backed Saudi bombing has caused Yemen. The impact of the protest reached well beyond Vancouver, with articles, photos and video of the rally reflected in many Arabic newspapers and online news throughout the Middle East as well as in Yemen, showing how activists are standing up against this criminal war on Yemen.

The rally speakers included Yemeni activist Asaad, who spoke of the destruction caused by the Saudi bombing of Yemen, as well as Mamdoh Ashir, Iraqi-Canadian and Muslim community social justice activist who spoke out against the attacks on Yemen as well as against the new U.S. war on Iraq. Azza, Tunisian social justice



Comedian, actor and social justice activist, Russell Brand joins "US Hands off Iraq" Protest. Vancouver, May 10, 2015.

activist and MAWO executive committee member, encouraged people to stand side by side in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Yemen against the brutal attacks. Thomas Davies, editorial board member of Fire This Time Newspaper, spoke about how the U.S.-backed Saudi war on Yemen is part of a new era of war and occupation that has encompassed the U.S.-led war and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq as well as the military interventions, sanctions and meddling in Libya, Syria, Iran, and many other countries in the region.

On May 29th, MAWO joined once again with the Iraqi community to picket in front of the U.S. Consulate in downtown Vancouver. Iraqi protesters and supporters called on the U.S. to "hear the Iraqi voice!" which called for the U.S. to leave Iraq, and proclaimed that the Iraqi people will not allow the U.S. to divide their country. Protesters also issued a "U.S. Out of Iraq Exit Visa" which was posted to the U.S. Consulate door. Both Iraqi community speakers and MAWO representatives spoke from the microphone and vowed that the resistance of the Iraqi community and antiwar activists around the world will continue to fight against war and foreign intervention in Iraq.

For information on upcoming antiwar events and actions, please visit [www.mawovancouver.org](http://www.mawovancouver.org) or follow MAWO on twitter @mawovan

# U.S-CUBA NEW RELATIONS: A CUBAN Point of View...



After the third round of Cuba-U.S. talks, held May 21-22 in Washington, the head of Cuba's delegation, Josefina Vidal, spoke with the Cuban press for about half an hour, answering several questions.

## **What are the main accomplishments of the last few months?**

What we have done over the last five months, for two countries which have not had diplomatic relations for more than 50 years, can be considered progress.

In fact, given the results which you yourselves have seen, which have been obtained gradually since the beginning of these conversations in January, the advances have been palpable. When we began in Cuba, in January, the range of topics we were discussing was much broader.

During two rounds, in January and February, we were talking about the issues of removing Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, and the necessity of resolving the Interest Section's banking situation. Today, we can say that these two issues have been resolved, or are close to resolution.

Beginning this week, our interests office in Washington has banking services and, at the end of this week, the removal of Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism will finally take place, which I understand will become effective when the decision is published in the Federal Register, early next week.

Thus, two of the issues we were debating over a certain period of time, have now been overcome.

There are other things which we must continue to discuss. Since the first round, we have been talking about other issues

of diplomats, but also to the functioning of a diplomatic mission.

At the same time, we have been simultaneously discussing the functioning of an embassy per se. We are now at the point of exchanging views on the next ideas and aspects which have been pending, related to the functioning.

## **Why has a certain amount of aggressive, anti-Cuba rhetoric persisted?**

Changing the rhetoric is something that takes its time: profiling, polishing, modifying. It truly amazes me at times to see, every now and then, that at the statement level, on the level of official statements which are made, some officials use phrases that remind us of where we came from, of the policy which is still in place, but which must supposedly change as part of the process of normalization of relations.

It seemed strange to me, at the closing of the 7th Summit of the Americas in Panama, to hear President Obama, during his press conference, say that the purpose of U.S. policy, in the case of Cuba, was not regime change.

Therefore, we hope that as we advance in the process toward normalization of relations, we will see a better match between this type of statement and real life.

Real life tells us that they are still requesting multi-million dollar funding to sustain these types of programs

which are related to the application and observance of the Vienna Convention. I am referring, in particular, to the behavior, the conduct

which Cuba considers illegal, since they are programs directed toward provoking change within our country, and which, at the same time, are being attempted without any sort of consent from authorities or the Cuban government.

## **Is money continuing to flow for these anti-Cuba plans?**

Congress, for its part, continues to approve significant amounts of money in response to requests from the government. In fact, we already know that for the fiscal year 2016, which begins in October of this year, being requested are some 20 million dollars, the same figure established by the current administration. We have taken note of these statements which are being made, and I have heard over the last week on two occasions, by Mrs. Roberta Jacobson referring to the possibility of this type of program being reviewed or adapted to the new circumstances.

Thus, we are truly expecting that this will be addressed, as part of this process, and that we might see a better match between what is said and what is done. It will be very important for us to ascertain that we are truly seeing a change in U.S. policy toward Cuba.

## **After three rounds, how is the climate within the talks?**

I should acknowledge that, for some time now, even before these rounds focused on





issues related to reestablishing relations and opening embassies, there has been a much greater level of professional communication, as compared to previous periods. And I must say that this has been maintained in the meetings.

In the meetings, the interaction, the exchanges, are respectful, they are professional. I have not really noted this type of expression on the rhetorical level that perhaps we have yet to see. I believe it must be recognized as such. I don't think it can be any other way. We have arrived at this point, after the December 17 announcements, precisely because we are treating each other as equals, on a foundation of respect and total reciprocity.

This does not mean that there are no differences. There are. On some issues, the differences are deep. It couldn't be any other way, but we are talking and we have learned to talk about the differences with respect, which was something lacking for over 50 years, during the moments we were able to have the opportunity for official interaction.

#### **What is the significance of these rounds of talks?**

The Presidents made a decision which only they have the authority to make, a political decision to move toward reestablishing diplomatic relations and opening embassies for the first time in 54 years. But now that needs to be put into practice, and therefore discussions are required, based on the principles of the United Nations Charter, and the Vienna Convention. All of these aspects must be reviewed.

We must talk about the number of people, what kind of staff. Because embassies have different categories, they have diplomatic officials, they have technical-administrative staff...

All of this must be discussed. What type of rank are these officials going to have, once relations are reestablished? What privileges and immunities will they have?

See how many things we have to talk about! How are the embassies going to work? How are we going to exchange documents to take steps toward formalizing and reestablishing the embassies? At what point are we going to communicate to the Swiss government - which has been representing us in the respective capitals - as to the termination of our agreement with Switzerland?

Perhaps there are people who think that this can be done more rapidly. I believe that the intention of both parties has been to move rapidly. In fact, I repeat, the impression I have is that, in four months, every time we have met, we have advanced a bit farther toward this objective, which we must reach to concretize the political decision made by our Presidents.

#### **How are the parallel technical meetings progressing?**

I think they are progressing in an appropriate manner. These types of conversations at the technical level to address issues of mutual concern, did not begin in January of this year, when we met for the first time to discuss the reestablishment of relations and the opening of embassies, but rather about two years ago.

What has happened since January is that these have been energized, in the areas we were already addressing, and in other new arenas which are now being opened up.

I believe they are progressing in an adequate manner; each one is taking a different path, and at the same time advancing in parallel, each with its own dynamic.

The number of issues Cuba and the United States are discussing is significant, as are others which potentially we know could

begin soon... to definitively work on issues of mutual benefit for Cuba, for the United States, for the people of Cuba and the United States, for the region, because many of these extend beyond the bilateral relationship, and some could even have an impact on a world level.

Specifically how are the talks on health and adherence to the law advancing?

The topic we have identified, to begin talks in the area of health - which I believe can be boundless given the experiences and developments of each of our countries in this sector - is that of infectious disease. I believe it is a very timely issue, as a result of globalization, climate change, all that we know.

Cuba has tremendous experience in the area of prevention and in combating and in confronting these diseases once they have appeared. What we have done in Cuba, and we have applied and helped in other countries of the world.

The United States has similar experiences as well, has a high level of scientific development, and also its own experience facing some of these diseases here, and in other places around the world.

I believe it is a very timely topic, very current, to begin this conversation which should occur in the month of June.

We are going to begin talking, as well, about an issue of much importance, especially now, which is the application of, and adherence to the law. And why do I say it is of much importance now? As a result of the decision to increase travel and exchanges between Cuban and the United States, there is greater movement of people between the two countries and problems appear.

*Continued on page 30*



# UNAC Holds a Successful Antiwar Conference

## STOP THE WARS AT HOME & ABROAD!

*Introduction By Alison Bodine*

*From May 8–10, 2015 more than 400 activists from across the U.S. and internationally gathered in Secaucus, New Jersey, for a national antiwar conference sponsored by the United Antiwar Coalition (UNAC). This conference brought together people from 29 U.S. states, Canada, Britain, Germany and Ukraine to discuss and plan organizing a united and effective international movement against U.S.-led wars and occupations, including the war being waged against poor and working people in the United States. The Conference had the participation of 116 organizations and more than 100 speakers between six plenary sessions and 31 workshops. Vancouver's antiwar coalition, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) sent a message of solidarity to the UNAC conference. This message reinforced the decisiveness of building a strong antiwar movement across the U.S./Canada border and continuing coordinated work between UNAC and MAWO.*

*For a full report on the 2015 UNAC Conference, including photos and all planned and endorsed actions, please visit: [www.UNACpeace.org](http://www.UNACpeace.org).*

### **UNAC Conference Action Plan: Political Goals, Objectives & Mission**

The United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) opposes all U.S. wars, whether they be in the form of direct military intervention with troops on the ground, privatized death squad wars, drone wars on every continent, sanctions and embargo wars, U.S.-backed military coups, “humanitarian interventions,” the U.S.-backed and -financed Israeli wars against the Palestinian people and the myriad of other modes of intervention and conquest that deny oppressed peoples the right to freedom and self-determination. We demand an end to it all: the war machine, the weapons of mass destruction, the trillions spent on advancing imperialist



interests and the associated devastation perpetrated on poor and working people the world over. We demand: U.S. Hands Off & Out Now – from the Middle East to Africa to Latin America to Iran, Ukraine & Beyond. Bring All the Troops Home Now & Dissemble Weapons of War! Trillions for Human Needs – Not One Penny for War!

UNAC similarly opposes the ongoing and deepening wars against poor and working people at home, including the militarization of the police; the racist mass-incarceration criminal “justice” system; the war-profiteering military-industrial complex; the ever-privatized, for-profit and slave labor prison-industrial complex; the deepening racist attacks and mass deportation of immigrants; racist persecution of Muslim communities; vicious and virtually unpunished racist police murders of African-American, Latino and Native American peoples; massive ever-intensifying austerity – assaults on wages, massive cutbacks of social services, massive student debt, unending tuition hikes, deterioration and re-segregation of public education – union busting; the oppression, exploitation and brutality waged against women; the government-promoted homophobic attacks on the LGBT community; the fossil-fuel, war-induced global warming and associated looming climatic catastrophe; and the wholesale police-state-like surveillance measures that increasingly obliterate civil and democratic rights. The U.S. needs a national urban policy that promotes sustainability of human life, rather than the profits of finance capital.

The U.S. wars abroad and the wars at home are inseparable aspects of a society that requires the subordination of human needs to the private profit interests of the bailed-out and enriched (at public expense) banks, corporations and multibillionaire

elite. We hail the emergence of new anti-racist and working-class forces that have demonstrated vibrant leadership capacities, from Black Lives Matter and the myriad of other anti-racist fighters to the ever-resurgent Palestinian community mobilizations against the Israeli slaughter of Palestinians to the recent International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 work stoppage in solidarity with their Black and Brown sisters and brothers who have been the prime victims of rampant police brutality and murder.

Our method of struggle looks to the broad mass of working people and their allies as the primary agency of social change. The history of all social movement victories is a history of the unification of the working masses and oppressed to advance their own needs and interests. UNAC strives to advance the unity of the antiwar and social justice movements in united, independent, inclusive and democratically planned mass actions to demonstrate the power of the working masses and achieve fundamental social and political change. We support a broad range of actions, including nonviolent direct action, lobbying and petitioning and we stand in solidarity with community resistance and rebellion against race and class oppression.

For a full UNAC Action Plan please visit: [www.UNACpeace.org](http://www.UNACpeace.org).





# ¡Venceremos!

## OUR STRUGGLE

### **Cuba Removed From List of State Sponsors of Terrorism**

29 May 2015 (Prensa Latina)

A Press Statement by U.S. State Department spokesman, Jeff Rathke, informed of Cuba's official removal from the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

In the official statement, the State Department spokesman noted that "The 45-day Congressional pre-notification period has expired, and the Secretary of State has made the final decision to rescind Cuba's designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, effective today, May 29, 2015."

Cuba has been included on the unilateral list drawn up by Washington since 1982.

In the statement he also noted that the "While the United States has significant concerns and disagreements with a wide range of Cuba's policies and actions, these fall outside the criteria relevant to the rescission of a State Sponsor of Terrorism designation."

In order to come into effect, the decision must be published in the Federal Register (the daily newspaper of the Federal government), although the diplomatic office has assured that the decision is effective immediately.

### **Venezuela Increases Teacher Salaries by 50%**

20 May 2015 (teleSUR English)

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro announced a 50 percent salary increase for public school teachers across the country.

The Venezuelan leader said Tuesday that the salary increase, which were proposed earlier this month, is part of a series of economic measures aimed to combat an "economic war" being carried out by right-wing sectors of society.

Maduro went on to note that the Venezuelan education system is designed to protect teachers in exchange for their contribution and service to society.

"Teachers are the treasure of the country because they are responsible for teaching the children of the future," Maduro said. Venezuelan Education Minister Hector Rodriguez praised the measure and promised to provide all retired teachers with pension benefits by the end of this year.

As part of the Venezuelan social welfare program, 39,000 of 85,000 retired teachers and school personnel received pension benefits in 2014; the rest will receive them in 2015. In recent years, the Venezuelan government has made domestic education a key priority within the country's national development plan.

In 2014, the Venezuelan State invested 6.9 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) in education and technology. The United Nations Organization for Education, Sciences and Culture (UNESCO) ranked Venezuela as the country with second highest university student enrollment in Latin America.



# We Will Win!

## AROUND THE WORLD

### **Cuban Medical Brigade in Nepal Attended More Than Two Thousands Patients**

25 May 2015 (Granma News)

One month has passed since the devastating April 25 earthquake in Nepal, Cities lie in ruin and the number of victims has surpassed 8,600. Anxiety remains fixed on faces, since the country continues to experience aftershocks.

On the night of May 12, the same night a severe aftershock hit the nation, 49 members of the Henry Reeve International Contingent Specialized in Disasters and Large Epidemics Brigade No.41 arrived in Katmandu.

The landscape was disheartening, Dantesque, I would say. The country didn't need nature to punish it this way. Those who managed to save their lives in the most affected areas have lost practically everything, including their most cherished loved ones," Dr. Luis Orlando Oliveros Serrano, head of the Brigade, told Granma.

The day after setting foot in Nepal, the Cuban medical brigade moved quickly to the area occupied by the National Center for the Study of Ayurvedic Medicine, as directed by the country's Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization, in accordance with plans made by the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs' advance team.

The brigade immediately set up a field hospital, which Dr. Oliveros described, "This center adjacent to a hospital has a capacity of 20 beds and excellent anti-seismic properties. We have installed all the equipment we brought from Cuba. Since the 18th, we have been offering all of the services for which the brigade is prepared: an operating room, an intensive care ward, x-rays, ultra-sound, a laboratory, sterilization facilities, a pharmacy, rehabilitation and out-patient consultations."

Additionally, he reported, the brigade is offering primary care in areas severely damaged around Katmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, with teams of comprehensive family doctors and specialists traveling to communities where they have treated more than 2,000 patients.

While tragedy continues to walk the streets in, hope is also present, in many cases in the form of a white coat. Dr. Oliveros comments, "Everyday we very humbly receive demonstrations of gratitude, as shown by the very behavior of our brigade."

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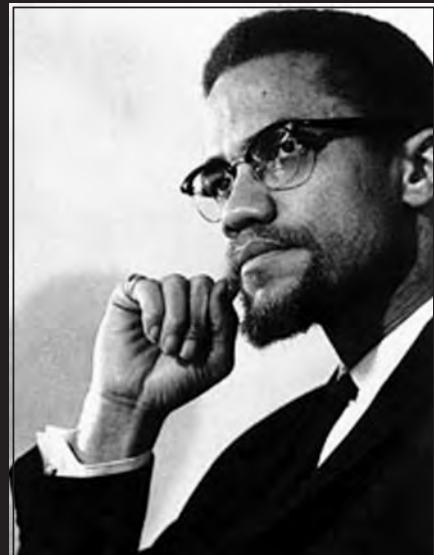
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## "By Any Means Necessary..."



## MALCOLM X SPEAKS

Excerpt from speech at the Ford Auditorium February 14, 1965

*Malcolm delivered this speech on the night that his home in New York was firebombed.*

"Don't struggle -- only within the ground rules that the people you're struggling against have laid down." Why, this is insane. But it shows you how they can do it. With skillful manipulating of the press, they're able to make the victim look like the criminal, and the criminal look like the victim.

Right now in New York we had a couple cases where police grabbed the brother and beat him unmercifully -- and then charged him with assaulting them. They used the press to make it look like he's the criminal and they're the victim. This is how they do it, and if you study how they do it [t] here, then you'll know how they do it over here. It's the same game going all the time, and if you and I don't awaken and see what this man is doing to us, then it'll be too late. They may have the gas ovens already built before you realize that they're hot.

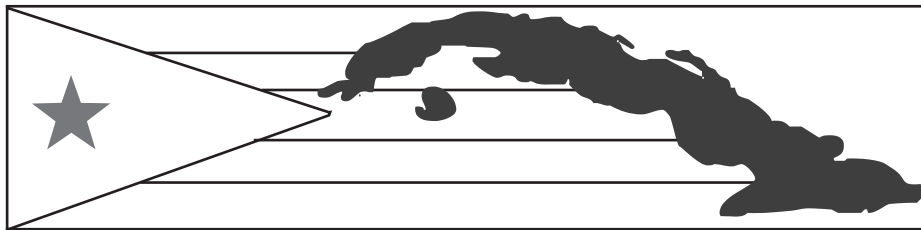
One of the shrewd ways that they use the press to project us in the eye or image of a criminal: they take statistics. And with the press they feed these statistics to the public, primarily the white public. Because there are some well-meaning persons in the white public as well as bad-meaning persons in the white public. And whatever the government is going to do, it always wants the public on its side, whether it's the local government, state government, federal government. So they use the press to create images. And at the local level, they'll create an image by feeding statistics to the press -- through the press showing the high crime rate in the Negro community. As soon as this high crime rate is emphasized through the press, then people begin to look upon the Negro community as a community of criminals.



# Cuban 5 Heroes are Free!

## The Fight to Lift the Blockade is Our Most Important Task to Defend Cuba!

### Very Successful CNC Convention Discusses the Importance of Organizing Against U.S. Blockade Against Cuba...



*By Alison Bodine*

On December 17, 2014, Cuba and the United States announced that they were beginning steps towards re-establishing normalized diplomatic relations between the two countries. With this, came the victorious return of all of the Cuban 5 Heroes, as Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino and Gerardo Hernández joined with René González and Fernando González. They were released from U.S. prisons and returned to Cuba after over 16 years of unjust imprisonment in the United States. Since December 17, the U.S. and Cuba have held talks about re-establishing diplomatic ties, and Cuba has now been removed from the U.S. "State Sponsors of Terrorism" list. However, the cruelest policy of the U.S. government against Cuba, the U.S. blockade, still remains.

It is within this dynamic political situation that from May 30-31, 2015 Cuba solidarity activists from across Canada gathered in Toronto for the 7th Biennial Convention of the Canadian

Network on Cuba (CNC). For two days, delegates from 19 different Cuba solidarity organizations, from Vancouver to Halifax, came together for celebration, discussion, debate and planning for the next two years of Cuba solidarity work across Canada, with a focus on the main task ahead, to join with people around the world in the struggle to end the cruel and immoral U.S. blockade against Cuba.

With this important work in mind, the atmosphere of the 2015 CNC Convention was decidedly charged and energetic. However, it was the simple words of the Convention's honoured guest, Cuban 5 Hero Fernando González that really set the tone – "It doesn't matter how hard it is, you just have to keep fighting." In fact, from opening night until the closing reception, it was clear that with the presence of Cuban 5 Hero Fernando González, the spirit of struggle against the U.S. blockade against Cuba filled the air, and brought new energy to the work of the CNC in the next two years.

The night before the convention began, there was a successful book launch of "Cuba Solidarity in Canada: Five Decades of People-to-People Foreign Relations" by Nino Pagliccia, a Cuba solidarity and long time social justice activist based in Vancouver, BC. This book covers the history of Cuba

solidarity in Canada through 12 chapters, written by prominent Cuba solidarity activists from across Canada and Quebec. Present at the book launch were seven of the book author's, including Tamara Hansen, the Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and Ali Yerevani, political editor of the Fire This Time Newspaper and initiating and founding member of the Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver and Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). Together, these Vancouver Cuba solidarity activists authored the books chapter "Building a Consistent and United Campaign Across Canada: the Effective Way to Free the Five Cuban Heroes." The book launch included a summary and introduction on the importance of solidarity by Nino Pagliccia, followed by words from authors present at the event. For more information about the book, and photos from the Toronto book launch visit:

[www.cubasolidarityincanada.ca](http://www.cubasolidarityincanada.ca).

The energy generated at the "Cuba Solidarity in Canada" book launch the night before continued into the next morning as the 2015 CNC Convention began. In addition to the delegates present, there were Cuba solidarity activists from across Canada participating as observers and also a distinguished Cuban delegation that included Cuban 5 Hero Fernando González, who is also Vice President of ICAP (the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples), Sandra Ramírez Rodríguez, the Chair of the North America desk of ICAP, His Excellency Julio Garmendia Peña, the Cuban Ambassador to Canada, Miraly González González, First Secretary of the Cuban Embassy in Canada, and Javier



*Book Launch of "Cuba Solidarity in Canada". Authors left to right: Ali Yerevani, Tamara Hansen, Brian Gordon Sinclair, Heide Trampus, Isaac Saneey, Nino Pagliccia and Elizabeth Hill*



*Cuban 5 Hero Fernando González.*

Domokos, Cuban Consul General in Toronto.

The next two days of the Convention were filled with reports, panels and resolutions meant to direct the work of the next two years of organizing for the CNC. This work began with an overview of what has been accomplished by the Cuba solidarity movement in Canada over the last two years, including a report from CNC Co-chairs Isaac Saney and Elizabeth Hill, as well as individual reports from CNC member groups. It was during this time that the victory of the return of the Cuban 5 was reflected most strongly, especially in the report of the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver by delegates Alison Bodine and Thomas Davies. Among others events and actions, the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver organized 110 consecutive monthly pickets for the Cuban 5 in front of the U.S. Consulate in Vancouver.

During the convention there were also three diverse panel discussions. The first of these panels was “Planning for 2015-2017 – New Challenges, New Struggles.” This panel featured CNC Co-chair Elizabeth Hill, Tamara Hansen, Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and Sandra Ramírez Rodríguez from the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). This workshop developed on proposals for concrete work to be taken on by CNC member groups, with the focus clearly stated by Tamara

Hansen, “Ending the U.S. blockade on Cuba should be the undercurrent of all our solidarity work.”

Other panels during the Convention included “Canada-Cuba Solidarity & 70 Years of Canada-Cuba Diplomatic Relations” with Nino Pagliccia, Jean Augustine (a former Member of Parliament in Canada) and His Excellency Julio Garmendia Peña, Cuban Ambassador to Canada. The final panel of the Convention was “Cuba, Today & Tomorrow: Renewal, Change and Continuity Struggles,” with CNC



*Cuban 5 Hero Fernando González speaks to a packed room in Toronto, May 30 2015.*

Co-chair Isaac Saney, Javier Domokos, the Cuban Consul General in Toronto and Keith Ellis, Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto and author of numerous books.

In addition to the important discussion taking place at the CNC Convention there was also an outstanding public forum “Cuba in the Struggle for a Better World,” held in the Steelworkers’ Union Hall in Toronto, on Saturday May 30. This forum featured Cuban 5 Hero Fernando González, Hero of the Republic of Cuba and the Vice-President of ICAP speaking for the first time in Canada. The large hall was standing room only as 300 people gathered to hear from Cuban 5 Hero Fernando González, who spoke about the return of all of the Cuban 5 to Cuba, but focused his presentation on the importance of the international solidarity movement coming together to fight for the return of the Guantanamo Naval Base to Cuba and the lifting of the U.S. blockade against Cuba.

The inspiring presentation by Fernando González was preceded by moving words

from Dr. José de Jesús Portilla García, an official from Cuba’s Ministry of Health and leader in organizing Cuba’s internationalist medical brigades. Dr. Portilla was just completing a CNC sponsored cross-Canada speaking tour about Cuba’s leading role in the fight against Ebola in western Africa.

During this dynamic event, there was also a special presentation made by Vancouver Cuba solidarity organizers Tamara Hansen and Alison Bodine. Together, they presented Cuban 5 Hero Fernando González with three binders containing nearly 150 posters for Cuban 5 solidarity work in Vancouver and BC, including the posters created for the 110 picket actions for the Cuban 5 held at the U.S. Consulate in Vancouver. This presentation was the highlight of the multiple times during the convention that the Free the Cuban 5 Committee Vancouver was recognized for its extraordinary effort for freedom of the Cuban 5 Heroes.

After a strong day of discussion and



*Tamara Hansen & Alison Bodine presenting Cuban 5 Hero Fernando with 150 posters for Cuban 5 solidarity work in Vancouver & BC.*

planning the 7th Biennial Convention of the Canadian Network on Cuba ended on Sunday, May 31st. Now, it is up to the work of the new CNC executive and of the member groups of the CNC to carry forward the objectives and resolutions laid out during this Convention. Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver are excited to be continuing our work with the CNC in building a strong and united Cuba solidarity movement across Canada.

End the U.S. Blockade on Cuba!

Return Guantanamo to Cuba Now!

Viva Cuba!





# Views on the Crisis Ukraine

## An Interview with 3 Social Justice Activists from Ukraine & Russia

*Interview by Alison Bodine &  
Janine Solanki*

*Introduction, and transcribed by  
Alison Bodine*

*In February of 2014 a bloody coup was carried out against the elected president of Ukraine. This coup had the financial and political backing of the U.S. government, which was funding far-right wing and neo-Nazi organizations involved in the coup. In the time since then, the U.S. and its allies have continued manipulating a devastating civil war in Ukraine at an immense cost to human life and infrastructure, especially in Eastern Ukraine. At the same time the U.S. and NATO have been building up their military presence in Eastern Europe. Canada will also be joining the western destabilization effort, pledging to send 200 so-called noncombat troops to Ukraine to train the Ukrainian soldiers and military police.*

*On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, Fire This Time attended an action commemorating a year since the massacre of 48 unarmed anti-fascist protesters in Odessa by supporters of the U.S. and E.U. backed coup government in Ukraine. Following this event FTT sat down with three of the organizers, Vlad, Simon and Maria, to discuss the Odessa massacre and the current situation in Ukraine.*

**Fire This Time:** Thank you all for sitting down with us here today after

**this very successful action in Stanley Park commemorating the massacre of people in Odessa one-year ago today. Can you tell us about what you are here commemorating today?**

**Vlad:** One year ago there was a group of anti-fascists who were peacefully demonstrating against the policy of the government that came to power by storming in, ousting the legitimate President [of Ukraine]. They gathered there every day, in that square near the Union building, as you know. But, that day there was a football game between a local team and the Kharkiv team. There were lots of hooligans coming, football hooligans, I could not call them any other name, because, you know, their behaviour is just crazy. So they came to Odessa and basically started clashes with anti-Maidan movement, anti-government movement and there were some clashes, there were some casualties in the centre of the city. Some people escaped, but there were a few who decided to go to the building where they were trapped and so the football hooligans, or whatever, the right sector movement, it's hard to differentiate between them, started to throw Molotov cocktails at the building.

The police little forces that were dispatched to that event did nothing, as usual. Police is useless, and it has always been useless in Ukraine, just corrupt, the

method of taking money from you, that's it, they don't do anything.

They burned people alive, some suffocated, and some people ... it's very hard for me even to recall what was happening. Officially, 48 people died, 42 identified, as far as I know, 6 are not known. The unofficial number could be close to 200. That's basically what happened.

**FTT:** Would either of you like to add or say anything else?

**Maria:** So on the question of why we are here today ... it is because today is exactly one year since that massacre happened. You cannot just be silent. Because if you are silent you are silent forever because what happens is people are trying to scare you off, to shut you up, so you don't speak up because of the coming consequences. But, we should not be afraid, because bigger consequences are coming if we are silent today, on such a day. That's what my perspective is.

**Simon:** Now in our digital age, we all become witnesses to those crimes. It was 30 to 40 hours of actual recording what was happening there that day. So, watching that and seeing the desperation of people, seeing how people were brutally killed, in front of police that were just standing there, just in front, like 3, 4 metres from them, and they did nothing. They were just standing and watching when civilians, not armed people, were beaten to death.

We were there, it was all recorded. You can see it on Youtube, you can see it on other recordings. That was all organized and the fact that the police were just standing there and watching them, doing nothing, the fact that fire trucks came only 45 minutes, one hour after there already was fire in the whole building and that it was only one truck, and it is a huge, huge building. That tells me that it was organized and that the city of the municipality of Odessa was involved.

**FTT:** Can you also give us your opinion on why the U.S. and the E.U. are intervening and meddling in Ukraine?

**Vlad:** It is a simple reason, because they want to distract Russia. Basically Ukraine is a buffer-zone now. Russia got a very aggressive neighbour, a new neighbour, a re-formatted neighbour. By propaganda, by everything they [people in Ukraine]

know exactly that the Russians are their enemy. I have relatives in Ukraine who hate me, they don't want to talk to me and they are of Russian-origin. They despise their ancestors who fought in the war against Nazism. They support Nazism. Some type of a new propaganda is brainwashing them. So, we have got a new state of aggression against Russia. So it is basically a global war against Russia and Canada is getting involved by sending its troops. It's terrible.

**Simon:** There are different reasons why NATO and the U.S. are there, it's their interest in the broad world. But, specifically to tell what it is, there are a few different reasons. One is that NATO wants to have their bases closer to Russia. Why they want to have it closer to Russia? I don't want to guess, because it is more like the Third World War. But, we can see in the last few years, more and more NATO bases are surrounding Russia.

So there are quite a few political, geopolitical, corporate interests in Ukraine. That brings the whole country to a collapse because the media are controlled by a few oligarchs who right now are trying to sell out Ukraine. Those people, most of them right now in government in Ukraine, have dual citizenship. So, all they are trying to do is to get as much money right now, and the next day they can be in their second-citizenship countries and just enjoy their life. So, they don't care what is going to happen with Ukraine, with Ukrainian people, after a year or two. And this is catastrophic because all the channels there are controlled by this oligarchy.

**FTT:** Why do you think that the Ukrainian government does not attempt to solve the crisis in Eastern Ukraine peacefully?

**Simon:** Because, we all know, historically, big money makes money on wars. Like the Second World War, Americans were making money on that and life was really good for corporations. So, the same is happening in Ukraine. We have an example right now, when the oligarchs are actually selling gas for war, for tanks and everything, for equipment, at a higher price than on the market, double, triple the price and catching this money. Because, when there is a war it is hard to investigate. If you are asking questions about where the money went, or where they are, right away you can be called

separatists and you can be thrown in jail and that's it. Right now there is a huge destruction to the country of Ukraine by oligarchs who are just stealing money from Ukrainians. They have to realize that.

**Maria:** And at the same time they are being told that it is Russia that wants your land and its people, because Russia is this aggressive, fascist state. For people who are not so much into politics, for people who are, you know, just want to finish graduate schools and things like that, they need to give them some sort of something to bite on, so they are giving them Russia as an aggressor, or "Russia is fighting against us ... we need to stand up, you need to do this ... because if you don't they are going to come to your house, they are going to take over your house like they did in Crimea," and they go and on and on. And for people who are not really involved in the actual situation, that is what they think - that it's Russia, that they are fighting against Russia.

**FTT:** What is your message to the progressive and activist community? Or, what is the best support that we can give?

**Maria:** To watch alternative news and just be open-minded. The internet is a great resource, so if you google you can come across a different perspective, something that you wouldn't come across in the western media. Actually, western media doesn't show it, even a tenth of what is happening there. Something like RT.com, is a really good source, they are actually alternative media.

**Vlad:** These days you don't even have to be really smart to figure a few things out, right? With the help of the internet, just type a few words and compare a few things and you know, you don't have to go to University to understand what's really going on. You just have to compare a few things and you see that the lie is really primitive. All these primitive things they say like "there was a house fire in Odessa, 40 people died." Not a big deal

right? Such a primitive lie.

**Simon:** I would also like to add that for Canadians to more easily understand the situation in Ukraine they have to see a similar situation in Canada. Let's say Francophone people have been here from the very beginning, they built cities, Quebec cities, they keep their culture, they keep their language. Let's say an Anglophone goes to a Francophone and say "you don't have history, if you don't like it, just go back to France. You will have to study English, you cannot speak French, you will have to study our history, and you are actually second-class citizens, if you don't do that." Right away, Quebec would rise and would go to war, and that is what happened in Ukrainian territories. Because, half of Ukraine cities were built by the Russian empire, by Catherine II and by other Czars and so the Russians were there, living there for 300 years so the people who were there, they have Russian traditions, Russian language, and they want to keep it, it is very simple. So, one of the ways that Ukraine can still exist as a country is through federalization, so that you have the right of people living, who consider themselves Russian, speak Russian and study Russian history and be proud to be part of Ukraine.

**Vlad:** The West is, Canada is, approaching this problem with double standards. Simon talked about Quebec, the same situation exists in Ukraine. Why don't they let them have their autonomy? Why? What's the problem with people who speak their own language? There is no problem with Quebec, we don't have any problems. Everyone is happy. And they are an excellent resource for Canadians, an excellent resource.

**FTT:** Thank you very much for this interview, we hope that our readers will be able to learn more about the situation in Ukraine from you.



*Right-wing fascists throwing petrol bombs at building.*



*Continued from page 22*

Unfortunately crimes are committed, and we do not have the mechanisms established between the two countries to combat this jointly.

In fact, Cuba and the United States have this type of collaboration in judicial matters, and in the application of the law, with many, many countries.

Neither the United States nor Cuba is interested in the proliferation of these crimes, and much less crimes of a transnational character, given the concerns they can generate and citizen security problems in our two countries, but also for the national security of both countries. It is therefore a very important topic.

We have not yet begun, setting a date is still pending, but we have already reached the conclusion that this is an area we must address, and something which could be beneficial for both countries.

**Once relations have been reestablished, how will a dialogue on normalization be undertaken?**

In Cuba, we have identified a preliminary list which, once we conclude this first phase, we must begin to discuss with the purpose of advancing toward normalization of relations.

For our part, we have presented the issues you are aware of – a preliminary list. It could be that as the discussion develops, others may emerge. The lifting of the blockade; the return of the territory illegally occupied by the Guantánamo Naval Base; an end to illegal broadcasts by Radio and Televisión Martí, which in addition to violating Cuba's sovereignty, violate norms and regulations of the International Telecommunications Union. Of course, there is the end to these programs which were originally conceived to promote regime change – as they are called here in the U.S. – which in our lexicon are subversive programs to promote changes in our country, and foment destabilizing situations within Cuba.

Of course, the Cuban side has talked about compensation for our country and our people for the damages caused by U.S. policy over 50 years.

The United States has announced at least one of the issues they are interested in discussing during the second phase: compensation for the properties which were nationalized in Cuba at the beginning of the Revolution.

Thus, we already have at least a range of well-defined issues to start. We must be realistic. We must know what we are talking about, and what is important is the willingness to

begin to participate in this kind of discussion.

We have not defined how we are going to do it; if a mechanism will be created; if commissions, groups will be created; if we address everything as a whole or each issue separately – none of this.

**Will there be another round on the reestablishment of relations?**

No one should think that we only talk when we see each other in these meetings. Between each one, we maintain fluid communication via the head of our Interest Section in Washington and the head of the U.S. interest Section in Havana.

In this way, we have exchanged ideas, presented opinions, positions, points of view. In principle, this is what we will continue doing over the coming days and weeks. As we move forward with this communication, we will reach the conclusion as to whether we can resolve (the remaining issues) in this manner, or if a new round of talks is needed.

*Continued from page 17*

In a lively and animated presentation, Dr. Portilla spoke not only about the incredible work of Cuba's 450 medical volunteers in the countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, but also about Cuba's history of internationalist medical solidarity and his own experiences as Chief of Cuba's medical personnel during Cuba's international mission in the former Republic of Congo.

The first event was held at a local high school. Over 150 students attended to hear from Dr. Portilla and learn more about Cuba's celebrated internationalist revolutionary doctors. Next, there was a city-wide event at the Roundhouse Community Centre with 95 people in attendance. The evening event came to end with a special live music performance with Maria Luisa Melendez, a Salvadorian musician and social justice activist, who moved the crowd with her beautiful songs. From the hills of Pakistan to the island of Haiti, from West Africa to Nepal, Cuba sends doctors to every part of the world where they are needed most. The tour of Dr. Portilla to Vancouver was a great opportunity to educate people in Vancouver about how revolutionary Cuba is leading the way for humanity and human rights when it comes to international solidarity!

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# What I saw, felt & learned while in Cuba with the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade

**Volunteering, Solidarity, Education & Fun!**



*By Thomas Davies*

Cuba is great! Cuba is unique! Cuba is the combination of everything in life you can absorb. Somehow it all mixes and moves together in ways which make you forget about sleep and language barriers as you dive into it all. This year I traveled on the Ernesto Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade. The Brigade is an exceptional 2 week journey that for more than 20 years has given people across Canada the opportunity to volunteer in Cuba and be exposed to life on the island.

Between April 27- May 9, 2015, 37 people from all ages and from across Canada participated as 'Brigadistas'.

In the early morning darkness of May 1st, and as the sun rose, we saw hundreds of thousands of Cubans streaming in to celebrate International Workers Day with their annual march and rally. People gathered joining the rally from 3 directions, all carrying colourful signs and flags, singing and chanting to celebrate their Revolution.

Cuba's May 1st activities were made even greater this year with the presence of the 5 Cuban Heroes, former political prisoners in the U.S., leading the march before joining Presidents Raúl Castro of Cuba and Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela to watch the rest of the rally. It was the Cuban 5's first May Day since being released and returning to Cuba. The celebration of their return continued on throughout the brigade including meeting the 5 in person!

The volunteer work this year took place on one of Cuba's famous urban organic agriculture farms. The brigade also entered high schools, hospitals, trade union centres, women's centres, universities, and factories to tour them all directly and speak with the professionals making them all run.

During our stay in Cuba undoubtedly we learned a lot. We learned some of the answers to how a tiny island which has been blockaded and attacked by the country that has mightiest army in the world for more than 50 years, can still be so full of life and an example for building a better world.

Interested yet? Well, you'll have a great opportunity to learn more in person with a report back, BBQ and cultural night about the 2015 Che Brigade! The event is taking place at Trout Lake Park in East Vancouver at 6pm on Sunday June 14th. June 14th is also the birthday of Ernesto Che Guevara so the event will also be celebrating the life of one of Cuba's heroes.

If you would like more information about the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade, you can visit the website at [www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/brigade](http://www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/brigade), e-mail [chevolbrigade@gmail.com](mailto:chevolbrigade@gmail.com), or in British Columbia, you can also contact B.C. Coordinators Tamara Hansen and Thomas Davies at 778-882-5223 or [vancouverbasolidarity@gmail.com](mailto:vancouverbasolidarity@gmail.com)

We look forward to meeting you next year in Cuba with 24th Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade!

## OUR HERITAGE



**Rosa Luxemburg**  
Revolutionary leader

**Excerpt from Social Reform or Revolution, Chapter VIII, Conquest of Political Power  
Written in 1900**

Legislative reform and revolution are not different methods of historic development that can be picked out at the pleasure from the counter of history, just as one chooses hot or cold sausages. Legislative reform and revolution are different factors in the development of class society. They condition and complement each other, and are at the same time reciprocally exclusive, as are the north and south poles, the bourgeoisie and proletariat.

Every legal constitution is the product of a revolution. In the history of classes, revolution is the act of political creation, while legislation is the political expression of the life of a society that has already come into being. Work for reform does not contain its own force independent from revolution. During every historic period, work for reforms is carried on only in the direction given to it by the impetus of the last revolution and continues as long as the impulsion from the last revolution continues to make itself felt. Or, to put it more concretely, in each historic period work for reforms is carried on only in the framework of the social form created by the last revolution. Here is the kernel of the problem.

It is contrary to history to represent work for reforms as a long-drawn out revolution and revolution as a condensed series of reforms. A social transformation and a legislative reform do not differ according to their duration but according to their content. The secret of historic change through the utilisation of political power resides precisely in the transformation of simple quantitative modification into a new quality, or to speak more concretely, in the passage of an historic period from one given form of society to another.

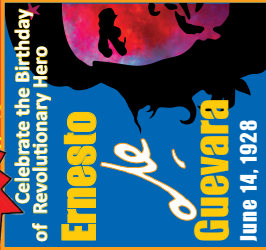
That is why people who pronounce themselves in favour of the method of legislative reform in place and in contradistinction to the conquest of political power and social revolution, do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the same goal, but a different goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new society they take a stand for surface modifications of the old society. If we follow the political conceptions of revisionism, we arrive at the same conclusion that is reached when we follow the economic theories of revisionism. Our program becomes not the realisation of socialism, but the reform of capitalism; not the suppression of the wage labour system but the diminution of exploitation, that is, the suppression of the abuses of capitalism instead of suppression of capitalism itself.



# REPORT BACK FROM THE 2015 **Che Guevara** Volunteer Work Brigade!

## TO CUBA!

Adventure • Volunteering • Fun



REPORT BACK, BBQ & CULTURAL NIGHT!  
2015  
**SUNDAY JUNE 14 - 6 PM**

Trout Lake Park (John Hendry Park)  
Look for Cuban flags near beach & concession



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# Don't Miss the BUS! Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba!



**SATURDAY JUNE 27<sup>2015</sup>**  
Pastors for Peace Border Crossing!  
Picnic and Rally @ Peace Arch Park  
Canada-US Border  
White Rock/Blaine  
12pm (For carpooling call: 778-882-5223)

**IFCO/Pastors for Peace**  
**www.PastorsForPeace.org**  
**Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC)**  
**www.VanCubaSolidarity.com**

Since 1992, Pastors for Peace Caravans to Cuba have called international attention to the cruel and immoral US blockade of Cuba by traveling from the US to deliver humanitarian aid to the Cuban people, breaking US law. The blockade causes shortages of food, medicine and other important supplies for 11.5 million people in Cuba. It is an immoral policy that uses hunger and disease as political weapons.